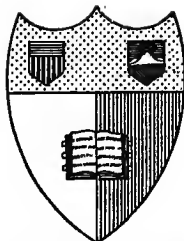




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LEWIS ARUNDEL.



DROPPING A DISAGREEABLE ACQUAINTANCE.—P. 252.

LEWIS ARUNDEL;

OR,

THE RAILROAD OF LIFE.

BY

FRANK E. SMEDLEY,

AUTHOR OF "FRANK FAIRLEGH."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY "PHIZ."

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LEWIS ARUNDEL.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE TRAIN STARTS, AND THE READER IS INTRODUCED
TO THREE FIRST-CLASS PASSENGERS.

"SURELY he ought to be here by this time, Rose; it must be past nine o'clock!"

"Scarcely so much, mamma; indeed, it wants a quarter of nine yet. The coach does not arrive till half-past eight, and he has quite four miles to walk afterwards."

"Oh! this waiting, it destroys me," rejoined the first speaker, rising from her seat and pacing the room with agitated steps. "How you can contrive to sit there, drawing so quietly, I do not comprehend!"

"Does it annoy you, dear mamma? Why did you not tell me so before?" returned Rose gently, putting away her drawing-apparatus as she spoke. No one would have called Rose Arundel handsome, or even pretty, and yet her face had a charm about it—a charm that lurked in the depths of her dreamy grey eyes, and played about the corners of her mouth when she smiled, and sat like a glory upon her high, smooth forehead. Both she and her mother were clad in the deepest mourning, and the traces of some recent heartfelt sorrow might be discerned in either face. A stranger would have taken them for sisters, rather than for mother and daughter; for there were lines of thought on Rose's brow which her twenty years scarcely warranted, while Mrs. Arundel, at eight-and-thirty, looked full six years younger, despite her widow's cap.

"I have been thinking, Rose," resumed the elder lady, after a short pause, during which she continued pacing the room most assiduously, "I have been thinking that if we were to settle near some large town, I could give lessons in music and singing: my voice is as good as ever it was—listen;" and, seating herself at a small cottage piano, she began to execute some difficult *solfeggi* in a rich, clear soprano, with a degree of ease and grace which proved her to be a finished singer; and, apparently carried away by the feeling the music had excited, she

allowed her voice to flow, as it were unconsciously, into the words of an Italian song, which she continued for some moments, without noticing a look of pain which shot across her daughter's pale features. At length, suddenly breaking off, she exclaimed in a voice broken with emotion, "Ah! what am I singing?" and, burying her face in her handkerchief, she burst into a flood of tears: it had been her husband's favourite song.

Recovering herself more quickly than from the violence of her grief might have been expected, she was about to resume her walk, when, observing for the first time the expression of her daughter's face, she sprang towards her, and placing her arm caressingly round her waist, kissed her tenderly, exclaiming in a tone of the fondest affection, "Rose, my own darling, I have distressed you by my heedlessness, but I forget everything now!" She paused; then added, in a calmer tone, "Really, love, I have been thinking seriously of what I said just now about teaching. If I could but get a sufficient number of pupils, it would be much better than allowing you to go out as governess, for we could live together then; and I know I shall never be able to part with you. Besides, you would be miserable, managing naughty children all day long—throwing away your talents on a set of stupid little wretches,—such drudgery would *ennui* you to death."

"And do you think, mamma, that I could be content to live in idleness and allow you to work for my support?" replied Rose, while a faint smile played over her expressive features. "Oh, no! Lewis will try to obtain some appointment: you shall live with him and keep his house, while I go out as governess for a few years; and we must save all we can, until we are rich enough to live together again."

"And perhaps some day we may be able to come back and take the dear old cottage, if Lewis is very lucky and should make a fortune," returned Mrs. Arundel. "How shall we be able to bear to leave it!" she added, glancing round the room regretfully.

"How, indeed!" replied Rose, with a sigh; "but it must be done. Lewis will not feel it as we shall—he has been away so long."

"It seems an age," resumed Mrs. Arundel, musing. "How old was he when he left Westminster?"

"Sixteen, was he not?" replied Rose.

"And he has been at Bonn three years. Why, Rose, he must be a man by this time!"

"Mr. Frere wrote us word he was the taller of the two by half a head last year, if you recollect," returned Rose.

"Hark!" exclaimed Mrs. Arundel, starting up and going to the window, which opened in the French fashion upon a small flower-garden. As she spoke, the gate-bell rang smartly, and in another moment the person outside, having apparently caught sight of the figure at the window, sprang lightly over the paling, crossed the lawn in a couple of bounds, and ere the slave of the bell had answered its impatient summons, Lewis was in his mother's arms.

After the first greeting, in which smiles and tears had mingled in strange fellowship, Mrs. Arundel drew her son towards a table, on which a lamp was burning, saying as she did so, "Why, Rose, can

this be our little Lewis? He is as tall as a grenadier! Heads up, sir!—Attention!—You are going to be inspected. Do you remember when the old sergeant used to drill us all, and wanted to teach Rose to fence?”

Smiling at his mother's caprice, Lewis Arundel drew himself up to his full height, and, placing his back against the wall, stood in the attitude of a soldier on parade—his head just touching the frame of a picture which hung above him. The light of the lamp shone full upon the spot where he had stationed himself, displaying a face and figure on which a mother's eye might well rest with pride and admiration. Considerably above the middle height, his figure was slender, but singularly graceful; his head small and intellectual looking. The features, exquisitely formed, were, if anything, too delicately cut and regular; which, together with a brilliant complexion and long silken eyelashes, tended to impart an almost feminine character to his beauty. The expression of his face, however, effectually counteracted any such tendency; no one could observe the flashing of the dark eyes, the sarcastic curl of the short upper lip, the curved nostril slightly drawn back, the stern resolution of the knitted brow, without tracing signs of pride unbroken, stormy feelings and passions unsubdued, and an iron will, which, according as it might be directed, must prove all-powerful for good or evil. His hair, which he wore somewhat long, was, like his mother's, of that jet black colour characteristic of the inhabitants of a southern clime rather than of the descendants of the fair-haired Saxons, while a soft down of the same dark hue as his clustering curls fringed the sides of his face, affording promise of a goodly crop of whiskers. Despite the differences of feature and expression,—and they were great,—there was a decided resemblance between the brother and sister, and the same indescribable charm, which made it next to impossible to watch Rose Arundel without loving her, shed its sunshine also over Lewis's face when he smiled.

After surveying her son attentively, with eyes which sparkled with surprise and pleasure, Mrs. Arundel exclaimed, “Why, how the boy is altered! Is he not improved, Rose?” As she spoke, she involuntarily glanced from Lewis to the picture under which he stood. It was a half-length portrait of a young man, in what appeared to be some foreign uniform, the hand resting on the hilt of a cavalry sabre. The features, though scarcely so handsome, were strikingly like those of Lewis Arundel, the greatest difference being in the expression, which was more joyous, and that the hair in the portrait was of a rich brown instead of black. After comparing the two for a moment, Mrs. Arundel attempted to speak, but her voice failing from emotion, she burst into tears, and hastily left the room.

“Why, Rose, what is it?” exclaimed Lewis in surprise; “is my mother ill?”

“No; it is your likeness to that picture, Lewis love, that has overcome her: you know it is a portrait of our dearest father” (her voice faltered as she pronounced his name), “taken just after they were married, I believe.”

Lewis regarded the picture attentively, then averting his head as if he could not bear that even Rose should witness his grief, he threw himself on a sofa and concealed his face with his hands. Recovering himself almost immediately, he drew his sister gently towards him, and placing her beside him, asked, as he stroked her glossy hair—

“Rose, dearest, how is it that I was not informed of our poor father’s illness? Surely a letter must have miscarried!”

“Did not mamma explain to you, then, how sudden it was?”

“Not a word: she only wrote a few hurried lines, leading me to prepare for a great shock; then told me that my father was dead; and entreating me to return immediately, broke off abruptly, saying she could write no more.”

“Poor mamma! she was quite overcome by her grief, and yet she was so excited and so anxious to save me, she *would* do everything herself. I wished her to let me write to you, but she objected, and I was afraid of annoying her.”

“It was most unfortunate,” returned Lewis; “in her hurry she misdirected the letter; and, as I told you when I wrote, I was from home at the time, and did not receive it till three weeks after it should have reached me. I was at a rifle-match got up by some of the students, and had just gained the prize, a pair of silver-mounted pistols, when her letter was put into my hand. Fancy receiving such news in a scene of gaiety!”

“How exquisitely painful! My poor brother!” said Rose, while the tears she could no longer repress dimmed her bright eyes. After a moment she continued, “But I was going to tell you,—it was more than a month ago,—poor papa had walked over to Warlington to negotiate about selling one of his paintings. Did you know that he had lately made his talent for painting serve as a means of adding to our income?”

“Richard Frere told me of it last year,” replied Lewis.

“Oh yes, Mr. Frere was kind enough to get introductions to several picture-dealers, and was of the greatest use,” continued Rose. “Well, when papa came in, he looked tired and harassed; and in answer to my questions, he said he had received intelligence which had excited him a good deal, and added something about being called upon to take a very important step. I left him to fetch a glass of wine, and when I returned, to my horror, his head was leaning forward on his breast, and he was both speechless and insensible. We instantly sent for the nearest medical man, but it was of no use; he pronounced it to be congestion of the brain, and gave us no hope: his opinion was but too correct; my dear father never spoke again, and in less than six hours all was over.”

“How dreadful!” murmured Lewis. “My poor Rose, how shocked you must have been!” After a few minutes’ silence he continued, “And what was this news which produced such an effect upon my father?”

“Strange to say,” replied Rose, “we have not the slightest notion. No letter or other paper has been found which could at all account for it, nor can we learn that papa met any one at Warlington likely to

have brought him news. The only clue we have been able to gain is that Mr. Bowing, who keeps the library there, remarked that papa came in as usual to look at the daily papers, and as he was reading, suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise and put his hand to his brow. Mr. Bowing was about to inquire whether anything was the matter, when he was called away to attend to a customer; and when he was again at liberty papa had left the shop. Mr. Bowing sent us the paper afterwards, but neither mamma nor I could discover in it anything we could imagine at all likely to have affected papa so strongly."

"How singular!" returned Lewis, musing. "What could it possibly have been? You say my father's papers have been examined?"

"Yes, mamma wrote to Mr. Coke, papa's man of business in London, and he came down directly, but nothing appeared to throw any light on the matter. Papa had not even made a will." She paused to dry the tears which had flowed copiously during this narration, then continued: "But oh! Lewis, do you know we are so very, very poor?"

"I suspected as much, dear Rose; I knew my father's was a life income. But why speak in such a melancholy tone? Surely my sister has not grown mercenary?"

"Scarcely that, I hope," returned Rose, smiling; "but there is some difference between being mercenary and regretting that we are so poor that we shall be unable to live together: is there not, Lewis dear?"

"Unable to live together?" repeated Lewis slowly. "Yes, well, I may of course be obliged to leave you, but I shall not accept any employment which will necessitate my quitting England, so I shall often come and take a peep at you."

"Oh! but, Lewis love, it is worse than that—we shall not be able to— Hush! here comes mamma; we will talk about this another time."

"Why, Lewis," exclaimed Mrs. Arundel, entering the room with a light elastic step, without a trace of her late emotion visible on her animated countenance, "what is this? Here's Rachel complaining that you have brought a wild beast with you, which has eaten up all the tea-cakes."

"Let alone fright'ning the blessed cat so that she's flowed up the chimley like a whirlpool, and me a'most in fits all the time, the brute! But I'll not sleep in the house with it, to be devoured like a cannibal in my quiet bed, if there was not another sivation in Sussex!" And here Rachel, a stout serving-woman, with a face which, sufficiently red by nature, had become the deepest crimson from fear and anger, burst into a flood of tears, which, mingling with a tolerably thick deposit of soot, acquired during the hurried rise and progress of the outraged cat, imparted to her the appearance of some piebald variety of female Ethiopian Serenader.

"Rachel, have you forgotten me?" inquired Lewis, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "What are you crying about? You are not so silly as to be afraid of a dog? Here, Faust, where are you?" As

he spoke he uttered a low, peculiar whistle; and in obedience to his signal a magnificent Livonian wolf-hound, which bore sufficient likeness to the animal it was trained to destroy to have alarmed a more discriminating zoologist than poor Rachel, sprang into the room, and, delighted at rejoining his master, began to testify his joy so roughly as not only to raise the terror of that damsel to screaming point, but to cause Mrs. Arundel to interpose a chair between herself and the intruder, while Rose, pale but silent, shrank timidly into a corner of the apartment. In an instant the expression of Lewis's face changed; his brow contracted, his mouth grew stern, and fixing his flashing eyes upon those of the dog, he uttered in a deep, low voice some German word of command; and as he spoke the animal dropped at his feet, where it crouched in a suppliant attitude, gazing wistfully at his master's countenance, without offering to move.

"You need not have erected a barricade to defend yourself, my dear mother," said Lewis, as a smile chased the cloud which had for a moment shaded his features; "the monster is soon quelled. Rose, you must learn to love Faust—he is my second self; come and stroke him."

Thus exhorted, Rose approached and patted the dog's shaggy head, at first timidly, but more boldly when she found that he still retained his crouching posture, merely repaying her caresses by fixing his bright, truthful eyes upon her face lovingly, and licking his lips with his long red tongue.

"Now, Rachel," continued Lewis, "it is your turn; come, I must have you good friends with Faust."

"No, I'm much obliged to you, sir, I couldn't do it, indeed—no disrespect to you, Mr. Lewis, though you have growed a man in foreign parts. I may be a servant of all work, but I didn't engage myself to look after wild beasts, sir. No! nor wouldn't, if you was to double my wages, and put the washin' out—I can't abear them."

"Foolish girl! it's the most good-natured dog in the world. Here, he'll give you his paw; come and shake hands with him."

"I couldn't do it, sir; I'm jest a-going to set the tea-things. I won't, then, that's flat," exclaimed Rachel, waxing rebellious in the extremity of her terror, and backing rapidly towards the door.

"Yes, you will," returned Lewis quietly; "every one does as I bid them." And grasping her wrist, while he fixed his piercing glance sternly upon her, he led her up to the dog, and in spite of a faint show of resistance, a half-frightened, half-indignant "I dare say, indeed," and a muttered hint of her conviction "that he had lately been accustomed to drive black nigger slaves in Guinea," with an intimation "that he'd find white flesh and blood wouldn't stand it, and didn't ought to, neither," succeeded in making her shake its great paw, and finally (as she perceived no symptoms of the *humanivorous* propensities with which her imagination had endowed it), pat its shaggy sides. "There, now you've made up your quarrel, Faust shall help you to carry my things upstairs," said Lewis; and slinging a small travelling valise round the dog's neck, he again addressed him in



RACHEL'S INTRODUCTION TO FAUST.

German, when the well-trained animal left the room with the astonished but no longer refractory Rachel.

"You must be a conjurer, Lewis," exclaimed his mother, who had remained a silent but amused spectator of the foregoing scene. "Why, Rachel manages the whole house. Rose and I do exactly what she tells us, don't we, Rose? What did you do to her? was it mesmerism?"

"I made use of one of the secrets of the mesmerist, certainly," replied Lewis; "I managed her by the power of a strong will over a weak one."

"I should hardly call Rachel's a weak will," observed Rose, with a quiet smile.

"You must confess, at all events, mine is a stronger," replied Lewis. "When I consider it necessary to carry a point, I usually find some way of doing it; it was necessary for the sake of Faust's well-being to manage Rachel, and I did so."

He spoke carelessly, but there was something in his bearing and manner which told of conscious power and inflexible resolution, and you felt instinctively that you were in the presence of a master-spirit.

Tea made its appearance; Rachel, upon whom the charm still appeared to operate, seeming in the highest possible good humour, — a frame of mind most unusual with that exemplary woman, who belonged to that trying class of servants who, on the strength of their high moral character and intense respectability, see fit to constitute themselves a kind of domestic scourges, household horse-hair shirts (if we may be allowed the expression), and, bent on fulfilling their mission to the *enth*, keep their martyred masters and mistresses in a constant state of mental soreness and irritation from morning till night.

Tea came, — the cakes demolished by the reprobate Faust in the agitation of his arrival (he was far too well-bred a dog to have done such a thing had he had time for reflection) having been replaced by some marvellous impromptu resulting from Rachel's unhopèd-for state of mind. The candles burned brightly; the fire (for though it was the end of May, a fire was still an agreeable companion) blazed and sparkled cheerily, but yet a gloom hung over the little party. One feeling was uppermost in each mind, and saddened every heart. He whom they had loved with a deep and tender affection, such as but few of us are so fortunate as to call forth, the kind and indulgent husband and father, the dear *friend* rather than the master of that little household, had been taken from amongst them; and each word, each look, each thought of the past, each hope for the future, served to realise in its fullest bitterness the heavy loss they had sustained. Happy are the dead whose virtues are chronicled, not on sculptured stone, but in the faithful hearts of those whom they have loved on earth!

During the evening, in the course of conversation, Mrs. Arundel again referred to the project of teaching music and singing. Lewis made no remark on the matter at the time, though his sister fancied,

from his compressed lip and darkened brow, that it had not passed him unobserved. When the two ladies were about to retire for the night, Lewis signed to his sister to remain; and having lighted his mother's candle, kissed her affectionately, and wished her good-night, he closed the door. There was a moment's silence, which was broken by Lewis saying abruptly, "Rose, what did my mother mean about giving singing lessons?"

"Dear, unselfish mamma!" replied Rose, "always ready to sacrifice her own comfort for those she loves! She wants, when we leave the cottage, to settle near some large town, that she may be able to teach music and singing (you know what a charming voice she has), in order to save me from the necessity of going out as governess."

"Leave the cottage! go out as governess!" repeated Lewis in a low voice, as if he scarcely understood the purport of her words. "Are you mad?"

"I told you, love, we are too poor to continue living here, or indeed anywhere, in idleness; we must, at all events for a few years, work for our living; and you cannot suppose I would let mamma——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Lewis sternly, "you will distract me." He paused for some minutes in deep thought; then asked, in a cold, hard tone of voice, which, to one skilled in reading the human heart, told of intense feelings and stormy passions kept down by the power of an iron will, "Tell me, what is the amount of the pittance that stands between us and beggary?"

"Dear Lewis, do not speak so bitterly; we have still each other's love remaining, and Heaven to look forward to; and with such blessings, even poverty need not render us unhappy." And as she uttered these words, Rose leaned fondly upon her brother's shoulder, and gazed up into his face with a look of such deep affection, such pure and holy confidence, that even his proud spirit, cruelly as it had been wounded by the unexpected shock, could not withstand it. Placing his arm round her, he drew her towards him, and kissing her high, pale brow, murmured—

"Forgive me, dear Rose; I have grown harsh and stern of late—all are not true and good as you are. Believe me, it was for your sake and my mother's that I felt this blow: for myself, I heeded it not, save as it impedes freedom of action. And now answer my question, What have we left to live upon?"

"About £100 a year was what Mr. Coke told mamma."

"And, on an average, what does it cost living in this cottage as comfortably as you have been accustomed to do?"

"Poor papa used to reckon we spent £200 a year here."

"No more, you are certain?"

"Quite."

Again Lewis paused in deep thought, his brow resting on his hand. At length he said, suddenly—

"Yes, it no doubt can be done, and shall. Now, Rose, listen to me. While I live and can work, neither my mother nor you shall do anything for your own support, or leave the rank you have held in society. You shall retain this cottage, and live as you have been

accustomed to do, and as befits the widow and daughter of him that is gone."

"But, Lewis——"

"Rose, you do not know me. When I left England I was a boy: in years, perhaps, I am little else even yet; but circumstances have made me older than my years, and in mind and disposition I am a man, and a determined one. I feel strongly and deeply in regard to the position held by my mother and sister, and therefore on this point it is useless to oppose me."

Rose looked steadily in his face, and saw that what he said was true; therefore, exercising an unusual degree of common sense for a woman, she held her tongue, and let a wilful man have his way.

Reader, would you know the circumstances which had changed Lewis Arundel from a boy to a man? They are soon told. He had loved, foolishly perhaps, but with all the pure and ardent passion, the fond and trusting confidence of youth—he had loved, and been deceived.

Lewis had walked some miles that day, and had travelled both by sea and land; it may therefore reasonably be supposed that he was tolerably sleepy. Nevertheless, before he went to bed he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

"MY DEAR FRERE,—There were but two men in the world of whom I would have asked a favour, or from whom I would accept assistance—my poor father was one, you are the other. A week since I received a letter to tell me of my father's death: to-day I have returned to England to learn that I am a beggar. Had I no tie to bind me, no one but myself to consider, I should instantly quit a country in which poverty is a deadly sin. In Germany or Italy I could easily render myself independent, either as painter or musician; and the careless freedom of the artist life suits me well; but the little that remains from my father's scanty fortune is insufficient to support my mother and sister. Therefore I apply to you, and if you can help me, you may—your willingness to do so, I *know*. I must obtain, immediately, some situation or employment which will bring me in £200 a year; though, if my purchaser (for I consider that I am selling myself) will lodge and feed me, as he does his horse or his dog, £50 less would do. I care not what use I am put to, so that no moral degradation is attached to it. You know what I am fit for, as well or better than I do myself. I have not forgotten the Greek and Latin flogged into us at Westminster, and have added thereto French, Italian, and, of course, German; besides picking up sundry small accomplishments, which may induce somebody to offer a higher price for me; and as the more I get, the sooner I shall stand a chance of becoming my own master again, I feel intensely mercenary. Write as soon as possible, for, in my present frame of mind, inaction will destroy me. I long to see you again, old fellow. I have not forgotten the merry fortnight we spent together last year, when I introduced you to student-life in the 'Vaterland'; nor the good advice you gave

me, which if I had acted on—— Well, regrets are useless, if not worse. Of course I shall have to come up to town, in which case we can talk; so, as I hate writing, and am as tired as a dog, I may as well wind up. Good-bye till we meet.

“Your affectionate Friend,

“LEWIS ARUNDEL.

“P.S.—Talking of dogs, you don't know Faust—I picked him up after you came away last year; but wherever I go, or whoever takes me, Faust must go also. He is as large as a calf, which is inconvenient, and I doubt whether he is full-grown yet. I dare say you think this childish, and very likely you are right, but I *must* have my dog. I can't live among strangers without something to love, and that loves me; so don't worry me about it, there's a good fellow. Can't you write to me to-morrow?”

Having in some measure relieved his mind by finishing this letter, Lewis undressed, and sleep soon effaced the lines which bitter thoughts and an aching heart had stamped upon his fair young brow.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW LEWIS LOSES HIS TEMPER, AND LEAVES HIS HOME.

“HAS the post come in yet, Rose?” inquired Mrs. Arundel, as she made her appearance in the breakfast-room the following morning.

“No, mamma; it is late to-day, I think.”

“It is always late when I particularly expect a letter; that old creature Richards the postman has a spite against me, I am certain, because I once said in his hearing that he looked like an owl—the imbecile!”

“Oh, mamma! he's a charming old man, with his venerable white hair.”

“Very likely, my dear, but he's extremely like an owl, nevertheless,” replied Mrs. Arundel, cutting bread and butter with the quickness and regularity of a steam-engine as she spoke.

“Here's the letters, ma'am,” exclaimed Rachel, entering with a polished face beaming out of a marvellous morning cap, composed of a species of opaque muslin (or some analogous female fabric), which appeared to be labouring under a violent eruption of little thick dots, strongly suggestive of small-pox. “Here's the letters, ma'am. If you please, I can't get Mr. Lewis out of bed nohow, though I've knocked at his door three times this here blessed morning; and the last time he made a noise at me in French, or some other wicked foreignering lingo; which is what I won't put up

with—no! not if you was to go down upon your bended knees to me without a hassock.”

“Give me the letters, Rachel,” said Mrs. Arundel eagerly.

“Letters, indeed!” was the reply, as, with an indignant toss of the head, Rachel, whose temper appeared to have been soaked in vinegar during the night, flung the wished-for missives upon the table. “Letters, indeed! them’s all as you care about, and not a poor gal as slaves and slaves, and gets insulted for her trouble; but I’m come to——”

“You’re come to bring the toast just at the right moment,” said Lewis, who had approached unobserved, “and you’re going down to give Faust his breakfast; and he is quite ready for it, too, poor fellow!”

As he spoke, a marvellous change seemed to come over the temper and countenance of Rachel: her ideas, as she turned to leave the room, may be gathered from the following soliloquy, which appeared to escape her unawares:—“He’s as ’andsome as a duke, let alone his blessed father; but them was shocking words for a Christian with a four years’ carikter to put up with.”

During Rachel’s little attempt at an *émeute*, which the appearance of Lewis had so immediately quelled, Mrs. Arundel had been eagerly perusing a letter, which she now handed to Rose, saying, with an air of triumph, “Read that, my dear.”

“Good news, I hope, my dear mother, from your manner?” observed Lewis, interrogatively.

“Excellent news,” replied Mrs. Arundel gaily. “Show your brother the letter, Rose. Oh! that good, kind Lady Lombard!”

Rose did as she was desired, but from the anxiety with which she scanned her brother’s countenance, as he hastily ran his eye over the writing, it was evident she doubted whether the effect the letter might produce upon him would be altogether of an agreeable nature. Nor was her suspicion unfounded, for as he became acquainted with its contents a storm-cloud gathered upon Lewis’s brow. The letter was as follows:—

“MY DEAR MRS. ARUNDEL,—To assist the afflicted, and to relieve the unfortunate, as well by the influence of the rank and station which have been graciously entrusted to me, as by the judicious employment of such pecuniary superfluity as the munificence of my poor dear late husband has placed me in a position to disburse, has always been my motto through life. The many calls of the numerous dependents on the liberality of the late lamented Sir Pinchbeck, with constant applications from the relatives of his poor dear predecessor (the Girkins are a very large family, and some of the younger branches have turned out shocking pickles), reduce the charitable fund at my disposal to a smaller sum than, from the noble character of my last lamented husband’s will, may generally be supposed. I am, therefore, all the more happy to be able to inform you that, owing to the too high estimation in which my kind neighbours in and about Comfortown hold any recommendation of mine, I can, should you

determine on settling near our pretty little town, promise you six pupils to begin with, and a prospect of many more should your method of imparting instruction in the delightful science of music realise the very high expectations raised by my eulogium on your talents, vocal and instrumental. That such will be the case I cannot doubt, from my recollection of the touching manner in which, when we visited your sweet little cottage on our (alas! too happy) wedding trip, you and your dear departed sang, at my request, that lovely thing, 'La ci darem la mano.' (What a fine voice Captain Arundel had!) I dare say, with such a good memory as yours, you will remember how the late Sir Pinchbeck observed that it put him in mind of the proudest moment of his life, when at St. George's, Hanover Square, his friend, the Very Reverend the Dean of Dinnerton, made him the happy husband of the relict of the late John Girkin. Ah! my dear madam, we widows learn to sympathise with misfortune; one does not survive two such men as the late Mr. Girkin, though he was somewhat peppery at times, and the late lamented Sir Pinchbeck Lombard, in spite of his fidgety ways and chronic cough, without feeling that a vale of tears is not desirable for a permanency. If it would be any convenience to you when you part with your cottage (I am looking out for a tenant for it) to stay with me for a week or ten days, I shall be happy to receive you, and would ask a few influential families to hear you sing some evening, which might prove useful to you. Of course I cannot expect you to part with your daughter, as she will so soon have to quit you (I mentioned her to my friend Lady Babbycome, but she was provided with a governess), and wish you to understand my invitation extends to her also.

"I am, dear Madam, ever your very sincere friend,

"SARAH MATILDA LOMBARD.

"P.S.—Would your son like to go to Norfolk Island for fourteen years? I think I know a way of sending him free of expense. The climate is said to produce a very beneficial effect on the British constitution; and with a salary of sixty pounds a year, and an introduction to the best society the Island affords, a young man in your son's circumstances would scarcely be justified in refusing the post of junior secretary to the governor."

"Is the woman mad?" exclaimed Lewis impetuously, as he finished reading the foregoing letter, "or what right has she to insult us in this manner?"

"Insult us, my dear," replied Mrs. Arundel quickly, disregarding a deprecatory look from Rose. "Lady Lombard has answered my note informing her that I wished for musical pupils with equal kindness and promptitude. Mad, indeed! she is considered a very superior woman by many people, I can assure you, and her generosity and good nature know no bounds."

"Perish such generosity!" was Lewis's angry rejoinder. "Is it not bitterness enough to have one's energies cramped, one's free-will

fettered by the curse of poverty, but you must advertise our wretchedness to the world, and put it in the power of a woman, whose pride of purse and narrowness of mind stand forth in every line of that hateful letter, to buy a right to insult us with her patronage? You might at least have waited till you knew you had no other alternative left. What right have you to degrade *me*, by letting yourself down to sue for the charity of *any one*?"

"Dearest Lewis," murmured Rose, imploringly, "remember it is mamma you are speaking to."

"Rose, I do remember it; but it is the thought that it *is* my mother, my honoured father's widow, who, by her own imprudence, to use the mildest term, has brought this insult upon us, that maddens me."

"But, Lewis," interposed Mrs. Arundel, equally surprised and alarmed at this unexpected outburst, "I cannot understand what all this fuss is about; I see no insult; on the contrary, Lady Lombard writes as kindly——"

An exclamation of ungovernable anger burst from Lewis, and he appeared on the point of losing all self-control, when Rose, catching his eye, glanced for a moment towards her father's portrait. Well did she read the generous though fiery nature of him with whom she had to deal: no sooner did Lewis perceive the direction of her gaze, than, by a strong effort, he checked all further expression of his feelings, and turning towards the window, stood apparently looking out for some minutes. At length he said abruptly—

"Mother, you must forgive me; I am hot and impetuous, and all this has taken me so completely by surprise. After all, it was only my affection for you and Rose which made me resent your patronising friend's impertinent benevolence; but the fact is, I hope and believe you have been premature in asking her assistance. I have little doubt I shall succeed in obtaining a situation or employment of some kind, which will be sufficiently lucrative to prevent the necessity of your either giving up the cottage, or being separated from Rose. I have written to Frere about it, and expect to hear from him in a day or two."

"My dear boy, would you have us live here in idleness and luxury, while you are working yourself to death to enable us to do so?" said Mrs. Arundel, her affection for her son overcoming any feeling of anger which his opposition to her pet scheme had excited.

"I do not see that the working need involve my death," replied Lewis. "Perhaps," he added, with a smile, "you would prefer my embracing our Lady Patroness's scheme of a fourteen years' sojourn in Norfolk Island. I think I could accomplish that object without troubling anybody: I have only to propitiate the Home Office by abstracting a few silver spoons,—and Government, in its fatherly care, would send me there free of expense, and probably introduce me to the best society the Island affords, into the bargain."

"Poor dear Lady Lombard! I must confess that part of her letter was rather absurd," returned Mrs. Arundel; "but we must talk more about this plan of yours, Lewis; I never can consent to it."

"You both can and will, my dear mother," replied Lewis, playfully but firmly; "however, we will leave this matter in abeyance till I hear from Frere."

And thus, peace being restored, they sat down to breakfast forthwith, Lewis feeling thankful that he had restrained his anger ere it had led him to say words to his mother which he would have regretted deeply afterwards, and amply repaid for any effort it might have cost him by the bright smile and grateful pressure of the hand with which his sister rewarded him. Happy the man whose guardian angel assumes the form of such a sister and friend as Rose Arundel!

Rachel was spared the trouble of calling her young master the following morning, as, when that worthy woman, animated with the desperate courage of the leader of a forlorn hope, approached his room, determined to have him up in spite of any amount of the languages of modern Europe to which she might be exposed, she found the door open and the bird flown; the fact being that Lewis and Faust were taking a scamper across the country, to their mutual delectation, and the alarming increase of their respective appetites. Moreover, Faust, in his ignorance of the Game Laws and the Zoology of the land of his adoption, would persist in looking for a wolf in the preserves of Squire Tilbury, and while thus engaged could not resist the temptation of killing a hare, just by way of keeping his jaws in practice; owing to which little escapade he got his master into a row with an under-keeper, who required first knocking down and then propitiating by a half-sovereign before he could be brought to see the matter in a reasonable light.

This gave a little interest and excitement to his morning ramble, and Lewis returned to breakfast in a high state of health and spirits. A letter from his friend Frere awaited his arrival; it ran as follows:—

"DEAR LEWIS,—If you really mean what you say (and you are not the man I take you to be if you don't), I know of just the thing to suit you. The pay is above your mark, so that's all right; and as to the work—well, it has its disagreeables, that's not to be gainsaid; but life is not exactly a bed of roses—or, if it is, the thorns have got the start of the flowers nine times out of ten, as you will know before long, if you have not found it out already. In these sort of matters (not that you know anything about the matter yet, but I do, which is all the same) it is half the battle to be first in the field; *ergo*, if £300 a year will suit your complaint, get on the top of the first coach that will bring you to town, and be with me in time for dinner. I have asked a man to meet you, who knows all about the thing I have in view for you. Pray remember me to Mrs. Arundel and your sister, although I have not as yet the pleasure of their personal acquaintance. Don't get into the dolefuls, and fancy yourself a victim; depend upon it, you are nothing of the kind. Mutton on table at half-past six, and Faust is specially invited to eat the bone.

"So good-bye till we meet.

"Yours for ever and a day,

"RICHARD FRERE."

"There!" said Lewis, handing the epistle to his mother, "now that's something like a letter: Frere's a thorough good fellow, every inch of him, and a real true friend into the bargain. I'll take whatever it is he has found for me, if it is even to black shoes all day; you and Rose shall remain here, and Lady Lombard may go to——"

"Three hundred a year! Why, my dear Lewis, it's quite a little fortune for you!" interrupted Mrs. Arundel delightedly.

"I wonder what the situation can be?" said Rose, regarding her brother with a look of affection and regret, as she thought how his proud spirit and sensitive nature unfitted him to contend with the calculating policy and keen-eyed selfishness of worldly men. Rose had of late been her father's confidante, and even adviser, in some of his matters of business, and had observed the tone of civil indifference or condescending familiarity which the denizens of Vanity Fair assume towards men of broken fortunes.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Arundel, "as you say, Rose, what can it be? something in one of the Government offices, perhaps."

"Curator of Madame Tussaud's Exhibition, and Master of the Robes to the waxwork figures, more likely," replied Lewis, laughing. "Or what say you to a civic appointment? Mace-bearer to the Lord Mayor, for instance; though I believe it requires a seven years' apprenticeship to eating turtle soup and venison to entitle one to such an honour. Seriously, though, if Frere wishes me to take it, I will, whatever it may be, after all his kindness to me, and Faust too. Faust, *mein kind!* here's an invitation for you, and a mutton bone in prospect—hold up your head, my dog, you are come to honour." And thus Lewis rattled on, partly because the ray of sunshine that gleamed on his darkened fortunes had sufficed to raise his naturally buoyant spirits, and partly to prevent the possibility of his mother offering any effectual resistance to his wish—or, more properly speaking, his resolution—to devote himself to the one object of supporting her and Rose in their present position.

It was well for the success of his scheme that Mrs. Arundel had, on the strength of the £300 per annum, allowed her imagination to depict some distinguished appointment (of what nature she had not the most distant notion), which, with innumerable prospective advantages, was about to be submitted to her son's consideration. Dazzled by this brilliant phantom, she allowed herself to be persuaded to write a civil rejection of Lady Lombard's patronage, and took leave of her son with an April face, in which, after a short struggle, the smiles had it all their own way.

Rose neither laughed nor cried, but she clung to her brother's neck (standing on tiptoe to do it, for she was so good, every bit of her, that Nature could not afford to make a very tall woman out of such precious materials), and whispered to him, in her sweet, silvery voice, if he should not quite like this appointment, or if he ever for a moment wished to change his plan, how very happy it would make her to be allowed to go out and earn money by teaching, just for a few years, till they grew richer; and Lewis pressed her to his heart, and loved her so well for saying it, ay, and meaning it too, that he felt he would die rather

than let her do it. And so two people who cared for each other more than for all the world beside, parted, having, after a three years' separation, enjoyed each other's society for two days. Not that there was anything remarkable in this, it being a notorious though inexplicable fact that the more we like people, the less we are certain to see of them.

We have wearied our brain in the vain endeavour to find a reason for this phenomenon, and should feel greatly indebted to any philosophical individual who would write a treatise on "The perversity of remote contingencies, and the aggravating nature of things in general," whereby some light might be thrown upon this obscure subject. We recommend the matter more particularly to the notice of the British Association of Science.

And having seated Lewis on the box of a real good old-fashioned stage coach (alas! that, Dodo-like, the genus should be all but extinct, and nothing going, nowadays, but those wonderful, horrible, convenient, stupendous nuisances, railroads; rattling, with their "resonant steam-eagles," as Mrs. Browning calls the locomotives), with Faust between his knees, apparently studying with the air of a connoisseur the "get up" of a spanking team of greys, we will leave him to prosecute his journey to London; reserving for another chapter the adventures which befell him in the modern Babylon.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH RICHARD FRERE MENDS THE BACK OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, AND THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO CHARLEY LEICESTER.

RICHARD FRERE lived in a moderate-sized house in a street in the vicinity of Bedford Square. It was not exactly a romantic situation, neither was it aristocratic nor fashionable; but it was respectable and convenient, and therefore had Frere chosen it; for he was a practical man in the proper sense of the term—by which we do not mean that he thought James Watt greater than Shakespeare, but that he possessed that rare quality, good common sense, and regulated his conduct by it; and as in the course of this veracious history we shall hear and see a good deal of Richard Frere, it may tend to elucidate matters if we tell the reader at once who and what he was, and "in point of fact," as Cousin Pheenix would say, all about him.

Like Robinson Crusoe, Richard Frere was born of respectable parents. His father was the representative of a family who in Saxon days would have been termed "Franklins"—*i.e.*, a superior class of yeomen, possessed of certain broad acres, which they farmed themselves. The grandfather Frere having, in a moment of ambition, sent his eldest son to Eton, was made aware of his error when the young

hopeful on leaving school declared his intention of going to college, and utterly repudiated the plough-tail. Having a very decided will of his own, and a zealous supporter in his mother, to college he went, and thence to a special pleader, to read for the bar. Being really clever, and determined to prove to his father the wisdom of the course he had adopted, sufficiently industrious also, he got into very tolerable practice. On one occasion, having been retained in a well-known contested peerage case, by his acuteness and eloquence he gained his cause, and at the same time the affections of the successful disputant's younger sister. His noble client very ungratefully opposed the match, but love and law together proved too powerful for his lordship. One fine evening the young lady made a moonlight flitting of it, and before twelve o'clock on the following morning had become Mrs. Frere. Within a year from this event Richard Frere made his appearance at the cradle terminus of the railroad of life. When he was six years old, his father, after speaking for three hours, in a cause in which he was leader, more eloquently than he had ever before done, broke a blood-vessel, and was carried home a dying man. His wife loved him as woman alone can love—for his sake she had given up friends, fortune, rank, and the pleasures and embellishments of life; for his sake she now gave up life itself. Grief does not always kill quickly, yet Richard's ninth birthday was spent among strangers. His noble uncle, who felt that by neglecting his sister on her death-bed he had done his duty to his pedigree handsomely, and might now give way to family affection, sent the orphan to school at Westminster, and even allowed him to run wild at Bellefield Park during the holidays.

The *agrémens* of a public school, acting on a sensitive disposition, gave a tone of bitterness to the boy's mind, which would have rendered him a misanthrope but for a strong necessity for loving something (the only inheritance his poor mother had left him), which developed itself in attachment to unsympathising silkworms and epicurean white mice during his early boyhood, and in a *bizarre* but untiring benevolence in after-life, leading him to take endless trouble for the old and unattractive, and to devote himself, body and soul, to forward the interest of those who were fortunate enough to possess his friendship. Of the latter class Lewis Arundel had been one since the day when Frere, a stripling of seventeen, fought his rival, the cock of the school, for having thrashed the new-comer in return for his accidental transgression of some sixth-form etiquette. Ten years had passed over their heads since that day: the cock of the school was a judge in Ceylon, weighed sixteen stone, and had a wife and six little children; Richard Frere was secretary to a scientific institution, with a salary of £400 a year, and a general knowledge of everything of which other people were ignorant; and little Lewis Arundel was standing six feet high, waiting to be let in at the door of his friend's house, in the respectable and convenient street near Bedford Square, to which he and Faust had found their way, after a prosperous journey by the coach, on the roof of which we left them at the end of the last chapter.

A woman ugly enough to frighten a horse, and old enough for

anything, replied in the affirmative to Lewis's inquiry whether her master was at home, and led the way upstairs, glancing suspiciously at Faust as she did so. On reaching the first landing she tapped at the door; a full, rich, but somewhat gruff voice shouted "Come in," and Lewis, passing his ancient conductress, entered.

"What, Lewis, old boy! how are you? Don't touch me, I can't shake hands, I'm all over paste; I have been mending the backs of two of the old Fathers that I picked up, dirt cheap, at a bookstall as I was coming home to-day: one of them is a real *editio princeps*—Why, man, how you are grown! Is that Faust? Come here, dog—what a beauty! Ah! you brute, keep your confounded nose out of the paste-pot, do! I must give Aquinas another dab yet. Sit down, man, if you can find a chair—bundle those books under the table. There we are."

The speaker, who, as the reader has probably conjectured, was none other than Mr. Richard Frere, presented at that moment as singular an appearance as any gentleman not an Ojibbeway Indian, or other natural curiosity for public exhibition in the good city of London, need to do. His apparent age was somewhat under thirty. His face would have been singularly ugly but for three redeeming points—a high, intellectual forehead; full, restless blue eyes, beaming with intelligence; and a bright benevolent smile, which disclosed a brilliant set of white, even teeth, compensating for the disproportioned width of the mouth which contained them. His hair and whiskers, of a rich brown, hung in elf locks about his face and head, which were somewhat too large for his height; his chest and shoulders were also disproportionately broad, giving him an appearance of great strength, which indeed he possessed. He was attired in a chintz dressing-gown that had once rejoiced in a pattern of gaudy colours, but was now reduced to a neutral tint of (we may as well confess it at once) London smoke. He was, moreover, for the greater convenience of the pasting operation, seated cross-legged on the floor, amidst a hecatomb of ponderous volumes.

"I received your letter this morning," began Lewis, "and, as you see, lost no time in being with you; and now what is it you have heard of, Frere? But first let me thank you—"

"Thank me!" was the reply, "for what? I have done nothing yet, except writing a dozen lines to tell you to take a dusty journey, and leave green trees and nightingales for smoke and bustle—nothing very kind in that, is there? Just look at the dog's-ears—St. Augustine's, I mean, not Faust's."

"Don't tease me, there's a good fellow," returned Lewis; "I'm not in a humour for jesting at present. I have gone through a good deal in one way or other since you and I last met, and am no longer the light-hearted boy you knew me, but a man, and well-nigh a desperate one."

"Ay!" rejoined Frere, "that's the style of thing, is it? Yes; I know all about it. I met Kirschberg the other day, with a beard like a cow's tail, and he told me that Gretchen had bolted with the Baron."

"Never mention her name, if you would not drive me mad," exclaimed Lewis, springing from his chair and pacing the room impatiently. His friend regarded him attentively for a moment, and then uncrossing his legs, and muttering to himself that he had got the cramp, and should make a shocking bad Turk, rose, approached Lewis, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said gravely—

"Listen to me, Lewis: you trusted, and have been deceived; and, by a not unnatural revulsion of feeling, your faith in man's honour and woman's constancy is for the time being destroyed; and just at the very moment when you most require the assistance of your old friends, and the determination to gain new ones, you dislike and despise your fellow-creatures, and are at war in your heart with society. Now this must not be, and at the risk of paining you, I am going to tell you the truth."

"I know what you would say," interrupted Lewis vehemently: "you would tell me that my affection was misplaced—that I loved a girl beneath me in mind and station—that I trusted a man whom I deemed my friend, but who, with a specious exterior, was a cold-hearted, designing villain. It was so; I own it; I see it *now*, when it is too late; but I did not see it at the time when the knowledge might have availed me. And why may not this happen again? There is but one way to prevent it: I will avoid the perfidious sex—except Rose, no woman shall ever—"

"My dear boy, don't talk such rubbish," interposed his friend; "there are plenty of right-minded, lovable women in the world, I don't doubt, though I can't say I have much to do with them, seeing that they are not usually addicted to practical science, and therefore don't come in my way—household angels, with their wings clipped, and their manners and their draperies modernised, but with all the brightness and purity of heaven still lingering about them,—that's my notion of women as they should be, and as I believe many are, despite your having been jilted by as arrant a little coquette as ever I had the luck to behold; and as to the Baron, it would certainly be a satisfaction to kick him well; but we can't obtain all we wish for in this life. What are you grinning at? You don't mean to say you *have* polished him off?"

In reply, Lewis drew his left arm out of his coat, and rolling up his shirt-sleeve above the elbow, exposed to view a newly-healed wound in the fleshy part of his arm, then said quietly, "We fought with small swords in a ring formed by the students; we were twenty minutes at it; he marked me as you see; at length I succeeded in disarming him—in the struggle he fell, and placing my foot upon his neck and my sword point to his heart, I forced him to confess his treachery, and beg his hateful life of me before them all."

Frere's face grew dark. "Duelling!" he said. "I thought your principles would have preserved you from that vice—I thought—"

A growl from Faust, whose quick ear had detected a footstep on the stairs, interrupted him, and in another moment a voice exclaimed, "Hillo, Frere! where are you, man?" and the speaker, without waiting for an answer, opened the door and entered.

The new-comer was a fashionably-dressed young man, with a certain air about him as if he were somebody, and knew it—he was good-looking, had dark hair, most desirably curling whiskers; and, though he was in a morning costume, was evidently “got up” regardless of expense.

He opened his large eyes and stared with a look of languid wonder at Lewis, then, turning to Frere, he said, “Ah! I did not know you were engaged, Richard, or I would have allowed your old lady to announce me in due form; as it was, I thought, in my philanthropy, to save her a journey upstairs was a good deed, for she is getting a little touched in the wind. May I ask,” he continued, glancing at Lewis’s bare arm, “were you literally, and not figuratively, bleeding your friend?”

“Not exactly,” replied Frere, laughing. “But you must know each other: this is my particular friend, Lewis Arundel, whom I was telling you of,—Lewis, my cousin Charles Leicester, Lord Ashford’s youngest son.”

“Worse luck,” replied the gentleman thus introduced; “younger sons being one of those unaccountable mistakes of Nature which it requires an immense amount of faith to acquiesce in with proper orthodoxy: the popular definition of a younger son’s portion, ‘A good set of teeth, and nothing to eat,’ shows the absurdity of the thing. Where do you find any other animal in such a situation? Where—But perhaps we have scarcely time to do the subject proper justice at present; I have some faint recollection of your having asked me to dine at half-past six, on the strength of which I cut short my canter in the park, and lost a chance of inspecting a prize widow, whom Sullivan had marked down for me!”

“Why, you don’t mean to say it is as late as that?” exclaimed Frere. “Thomas Aquinas has taken longer to splice than I was aware of; to be sure, his back was dreadfully shattered. Excuse me half a minute; I’ll just wash the paste off my hands, make myself decent, and be with you in no time.” As he spoke he left the room.

“What a life for a reasonable being to lead!” observed Leicester, flinging himself back in Frere’s reading-chair. “Now that fellow was as happy with his paste-pot as I should be if some benevolent individual in the Fairy Tale and Good Genius line were to pay my debts and marry me to an heiress with £10,000 a year. An inordinate affection for books will be that man’s destruction. You have known him some years, I think, Mr. Arundel?”

Lewis replied in the affirmative, and Leicester continued—

“Don’t you perceive that he is greatly altered? He stoops like an old man, sir; his eyes are getting weak,—it’s an even chance whether he is shaved or not; he looks upon brushes as superfluities, and eschews bears’ grease entirely, not to mention a very decided objection to the operations of the hair-cutter; then the clothes he wears,—where he contrives to get such things I can’t conceive, unless they come out of Monmouth Street, and then they would be better cut; but the worst of it is, he has no proper feeling about it,—perfectly callous!” He sighed, and then resumed. “It was last Saturday, I

think,—'pon my word, you will scarcely believe it, but it's true, I do assure you: I had given my horse to the groom, and was lounging by the Serpentine, with Egerton of the Guards, and Harry Vain, who is about the best dressed man in London, a little after five o'clock, and the park as full as it could hold, when who should I see, striding along like a postman among the swells, but Master Richard Frere! And how do you suppose he was dressed? We'll begin at the top, and take him downwards: Imprimis, a shocking bad hat, set on the back of his head, after the fashion of the *he* peasants in a pastoral chorus at the Opera House; a seedy black coat, with immense flaps, and a large octavo edition of St. Senanus, or some of them, sticking out of the pocket; a white choker villainously tied, which looked as if he had slept in it the night before; a most awful waistcoat, black-and-white plaid trousers guiltless of straps, worsted stockings, and a clumsy species of shooting shoes; and because all this was not enough, he had a large umbrella, although the day was lovely, and a basket in his hand, with the neck of a black bottle peeping out of it, containing port wine, which it seems he was conveying to a superannuated nurse of his who hangs out at Kensington. I turned my head away, hoping that as he was staring intently at something in the water, he might not recognise me; but it was of no use. Just as Egerton, who did not know him, exclaimed, 'Here's a natural curiosity! Did you ever see such a Guy in your life?' he looked up and saw me: in another minute his great paw was laid upon my shoulder, and I was accosted thus:—'Ah, Leicester! you here? Just look at that duck with the grey bill; that's a very rare bird indeed; it comes from Central Asia. I did not know they had a specimen in this country; it is one of the Teal family,—*Querquedula Glocitans*, the bimaculated teal,—so called from two bright spots near the eye. Look, you can see them now,—very rare bird,—very rare bird indeed!' And so he ran on, till suddenly recollecting that he was in a hurry, he shook my hand till my arm ached (dropping the umbrella on Vain's toes as he did so) and posted off, leaving me to explain to my companions how it was possible such an apparition should have been seen in any place except Bedlam. Richard Frere's a right good fellow, and I have an immense respect for him, but he is a very trying relative to meet in Hyde Park during the London season."

Having delivered himself of this sentiment, the Honourable Charles, or, as he was more commonly denominated by his intimates, Charley Leicester, leaned back in his chair, apparently overcome by the recollections his tale had excited, in which position he remained, cherishing his whiskers, till their host reappeared.

The dinner was exactly such a meal as one gentleman of moderate income should give to two others, not particularly gourmands; that is, there was enough to eat and drink, and everything was excellent of its kind; one of those mysterious individuals who exist only in large cities and fairy tales having provided the entire affair, and waited at table like a duke's butler into the bargain. When the meal was concluded, and the good genius had vanished, after placing before them a most inviting magnum of claret, and said "Yessir" for the last time, Frere

turned to Lewis, and observed, "By the way, Arundel, I dare say you are anxious to hear about this appointment, or situation, or whatever the correct term may be,—the thing I mentioned to you. My cousin Charles can tell you all there is to hear concerning the matter, for the good folks are his friends, and not mine; indeed, I scarcely know them."

Thus appealed to, Charley Leicester filled a bumper of claret, seated himself in an easy attitude, examined his well-turned leg and unexceptionable boot with a full appreciation of their respective merits, and then sipping his wine and addressing Lewis, began as follows:—

"Well, Mr. Arundel, this is the true state of the case, as far as I know about it. You may perhaps be acquainted with the name of General Grant?"

Lewis replied in the negative, and Leicester continued—

"Ah! yes, I forgot, you have been on the Continent for some time; however, the General is member for A——, and a man very well known about town. Now, he happens to be a sort of cousin of mine—my mother, Lady Ashford, was a Grant; and for that reason, or some other, the General has taken a liking to me, and generously affords me his countenance and protection. So, when I have nothing better to do, I go and vegetate at Broadhurst, an old rambling place in H——shire, that has been in his family since the flood—splendid shooting, though; he preserves strictly, and transports a colony of poachers every year. I was sitting with him the other day, when he suddenly began asking about Frere, where he was, what he was doing, and all the rest of it. So I related that he was secretary to a learned society, and was popularly supposed to know more than all the *scavans* in Europe and the Dean of Dunderstir put together. Whereupon he began muttering, 'Unfortunate!—he was just the person—learned man—good family—well connected—most unlucky!' 'What's the matter, General?' said I. 'A very annoying affair, Charles—a very great responsibility has devolved upon me, a matter of extreme moment—clear £12,000 a year, and a long minority.' 'Has £12,000 a year devolved upon you, sir?' returned I. 'I wish Dame Fortune would try me with some such responsibility.' In reply he gave me the following account:—

"It appeared that one of his most intimate friends and neighbours, an old baronet, had lately departed this life; the title and estates descend to a grandson, a minor, and General Grant had been appointed guardian. All this was bad enough, but the worst was yet to come—he had promised his dying friend that the boy should reside in his house. Now it seems that, as a sort of set-off against his luck in coming into the world with a gold spoon in his mouth, the said boy was born with even less brains than usually fall to the lot of Fortune's favourites—in plain English, he is half an idiot. Accordingly, the General's first care was to provide the young bear with a leader, and in his own mind he had fixed on Frere, whom he knew by reputation, as the man, and was grievously disappointed when he found he was bespoken. I suggested that, although he could not undertake the duty himself, he might possibly know some one who could, and offered to

ascertain. The General jumped at the idea—*hinc ille lachrymæ*—hence the whole business.”

“Just as I received your letter,” began Frere, “Leicester came in to make the inquiry. In fact the thing fitted like the advertisements in *The Times*—‘Wants a situation as serious footman in a pious family; wages not so much an object as moral cultivation.’—‘Wanted in a pious family, a decidedly serious footman, wages moderate, but the spiritual advantages unexceptionable.’—‘If A. B. is not utterly perfidious, and lost to all the noblest feelings of humanity, he will forward a small enclosure to C. D. at Mrs. Bantam’s, oilman, Tothill Street.’—‘A. B. is desirous of communicating with C. D.; if forgiven, he will never do so no more, at any price.’ You may see lots of them in the advertising sheet; they are like angry women, sure to answer one another if you leave them alone. And now, what do you think of the notion, Lewis?”

“Why, there are one or two points to be considered,” replied Lewis. “In the first place, what would be the duties of the situation? In the second, am I fitted to perform them? In the third—— But, however, I have named the most important.”

“As to the duties,” replied Leicester, “I should fancy they would be anything but overpowering—rather in the nothing-to-do-and-a-man-to-help-you style than otherwise. All the General said was, ‘Mind, I must have a *gentleman*, a person who is accustomed to the rank of life in which he will have to move—he must be a young man, or he will not readily fall into my habits and wishes. As he is to live in my family, he must be altogether presentable. His chief duty will be to endeavour to develop my ward’s mind, and fit him for the position which his rank and fortune render it incumbent on him to occupy.’ To which speech, delivered in a very stately manner, I merely said, ‘Yes, exactly;’ a style of remark to which no exception could reasonably be taken, unless on the score of want of originality.”

“Is the General in town, Charley?” asked Frere.

“Yes; he is waiting about this very business,” was the reply.

“Well then, the best thing will be for you to take Arundel there to-morrow morning, and bring them face to face; that is the way to do business, depend upon it.”

“Will not that be giving Mr. Leicester a great deal of trouble?” suggested Lewis.

“Not at all, my dear sir,” replied Leicester, good-naturedly; “I’ll call for you at twelve o’clock, and drive you up to Park Crescent in my cab. Having once taken the matter in hand, I am anxious to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion—besides, a man must lunch, and the General’s pale ale is by no means to be despised.”

At this moment the servant entered, and handing Frere a card, informed him the gentleman wished to speak with him.

“Tell him to walk in. Say that I have one or two friends taking wine with me, and that I hope he will join us. Now, Lewis, I will introduce you to an original—you know him, Leicester—Marmaduke Grandeville.”

“*De Grandeville*, my dear fellow—don’t forget the *De*, unless you

intend him to call you out. What, is 'the Duke' coming? Yes, I certainly do know him, *rather*—just a very little." Then, speaking in an affected yet pompous tone, he continued—"Ar—really—yes—the De Grandevilles—very old Yorkshire family in the West Riding—came in with the Conqueror."

"That's exactly like him," exclaimed Frere, laughing. "Hush! here he is."

As he spoke the door opened slowly, and a head with a hat on first appeared, then followed a pair of broad shoulders, and lastly the whole man entered bodily. Drawing himself up with a stiff military air, he closed the door, and slightly raising his hat, shaded his eyes with it, while he reconnoitred the company.

"There, come along in, man; you know Charles Leicester—this is an old Westminster friend of mine, Lewis Arundel: now here's a clean glass; take some claret."

The individual thus addressed made the slightest possible acknowledgment on being introduced to Lewis, favoured Leicester with a military salute, laid a large heavy hand adorned with a ring of strange and antique fashion patronisingly on Frere's shoulder, poured himself out a glass of wine, and then wheeling round majestically to the fire, and placing his glass on the chimney-piece, faced the company with an air equally dignified and mysterious, thereby affording Lewis a good opportunity of examining his appearance. He was above the middle height and powerfully made, so much so as to give his clothes, which were fashionably cut, the air of being a size too small for him. He wore his coat buttoned tightly across his chest, which he carried well forward after the manner of a cuirassier; indeed, his whole gait and bearing were intensely military. His age might be two or three-and-thirty; he had dark hair and whiskers, good though rather coarse features, and a more ruddy complexion than usually falls to the lot of a Londoner. After sipping his wine leisurely, he folded his arms with an air of importance, and fixing his eyes significantly on the person addressed, said, "Ar—Leicester, how is it Lord Ashford happens to be out of town just now?"

"'Pon my word, I don't know," was the reply; "my father is not usually in the habit of explaining his movements, particularly to such an unimportant individual as myself. I have a vague idea Bellefield wrote to beg him to come down for something—he's at the Park, at all events."

"Ar—yes, you must not be surprised if you see him in Belgrave Square to-morrow; *we* want him; he's been—ar—written to to-night."

"How the deuce do you know that?" inquired Frere. "I never can make out where you contrive to pick up those things."

"Who are *we*?" inquired Lewis in an undertone of Leicester, near whom he was seated. "Does Mr. Grandeville belong to the Government?"

"Not really, only in imagination," was the reply. "*We* means himself and the other Whig magnates of the land, in this instance."

"Then you did not really know Graves was dead?" continued Grandeville.

"I am not quite certain that I even knew he was alive," replied Leicester. "Who was he?"

A significant smile, saying plainly, "Don't fancy I am going to believe you as ignorant as you pretend," floated across Grandeville's face ere he continued: "You need not be so cautious with me, I can assure you. The moment I heard Graves was given over, I wrote—ar—that is, I gave the hint to a man who wrote to Lord Bellefield to say the county was his; he had only to declare himself, and he would walk over the course."

"Extremely kind of you, I'm sure," replied Leicester; then turning to Lewis, while Grandeville was making some mysterious communication to Frere, he added in an undertone, "That's a lie from beginning to end. I had a note from Bellefield (he's my *frère aîné*, you know) this morning, in which he says, 'Our county member has been dangerously ill, but is now better;' and he adds, 'Some of the fools about here wanted me to put up for the county if he popped off, but I am not going to thrust my neck into the collar to please any of them.' Bell's too lazy by half for an M.P., and small blame to him either."

Frere having listened to De Grandeville's whispered communication, appeared for a moment embarrassed, and then observed—but an adventure so important as that to which his observation related deserves a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

LEWIS ENLISTS UNDER A "CONQUERING HERO," AND STARTS ON A DANGEROUS EXPEDITION.

"I SHOULD be happy to join you, but you see I am engaged to my friends here," observed Frere to Grandeville.

"You would never dream of standing on ceremony with me, Frere, I hope," interposed Lewis.

"Why should we not all go together?" inquired Frere; "the more the merrier, particularly if it should come to a shindy."

"What's the nature of the entertainment?" asked Leicester.

"Tell them, De Grandeville," said Frere, looking hard at his cousin, as he slightly emphasised the *De*.

"Ar—well, you won't let it go further, I'm sure, but there's a meeting to be held to-night at a kind of Mechanics' Institute, a place I and one or two other influential men have had our eyes on for some time past, where they promulgate very unsound opinions; and we have been only waiting our opportunity to give the thing a check, and show them that the landed gentry are united in their determination not to tolerate sedition, or in fact anything of the sort; and I have had a hint from a very sure quarter (I walked straight from Downing Street here) that to-night they are to muster in force—a regular show-

off; so a party of us are going to be present and watch the proceedings, and if there should be seditious language used, we shall make a decided demonstration, let them feel the power they are arraying themselves against, and the utter madness of provoking such an unequal struggle."

"Then we have a very fair chance of a row, I should hope," interposed Lewis eagerly, his eyes sparkling with excitement; "'twill put us in mind of old sixth-form days, eh, Frere?"

"Leicester, what say you? Do you mind dirtying your kid gloves in the good cause?" asked Frere.

"There is no time to put on an old coat, I suppose?" was the reply. "A broken head I don't mind occasionally, it gives one a new sensation; but to sacrifice good clothes verges too closely on the wantonly extravagant to suit either my pocket or my principles."

"I will lend you one of mine," returned Frere.

"Heaven forbid!" was the horrified rejoinder. "I have too much regard for the feelings of my family, let alone those of my tailor, to dream of such a thing for a minute. Only suppose anything were to happen to me, just see how it would read in the papers: 'The body of the unfortunate deceased was enveloped in a threadbare garment of mysterious fashion; in the enormous pockets which undermined its voluminous skirts was discovered, amongst other curiosities, the leg-bone of a fossil Iguanodon.'"

"Gently there!" cried Frere; "how some people are given to exaggeration! Because I happened accidentally one day to pull out two of the vertebræ of——"

"Ar—if you'll allow me to interrupt you," began Grandeville, "I don't think you need apprehend any display of physical force; our object is, if possible, to produce a moral effect—in fact, by weight of character and position, to impress them with a deep sense of the power and resources of the upper classes."

"Still a good licking is a very effectual argument where other means of persuasion fail. I have great faith in fists," said Frere.

"Ar—in the event of our being obliged to have recourse to such extreme measures, I must impress upon you the necessity of discipline," returned Grandeville. "Look to me for orders, ar—I am not exactly—ar—regular profession—ar—military, though when I was at the headquarters of the ——th in Ireland last year, they did me the honour to say that I had naturally a very unusual strategic turn—a good officer spoiled—ha! ha!"

"I always thought you had a sort of Life-guardsman-like look about you," said Leicester, with a sly glance at the others. "You often hear of a man being one of 'Nature's gentlemen,' now I should call you one of 'Nature's guardsmen.'"

"Ar—yes, not so bad that," returned Grandeville, the possibility of Leicester's meaning to laugh at him faintly occurring to him, and being instantly rejected as utterly inconceivable. "Here, sir," he continued, turning abruptly to Lewis, "feel my arm; there's muscle for you! I don't say it by way of a boast, but there is not such an arm as that in her Majesty's ——th; there was not one of their crack

men that could hold up so heavy a weight as I could, for I tried the thing when I was over at Killandrum last autumn, and beat them all."

"At what time does your entertainment commence, may I ask?" inquired Leicester.

"Ar—I promised to join the others at a quarter before nine; the meeting was to commence at nine, and we shall have some little way to walk."

"Then the sooner we are off the better," said Frere. "But you expect a reinforcement, do you?"

"Ar—some men, some of our set, you understand, very first-rate fellows who have the cause at heart, have agreed to come and carry the matter through with a high hand. Failure might produce very serious results, but the right measures have been taken; I dropped a hint at the Horse Guards."

"I suppose I had better not take Faust," observed Lewis. "If there is a crowd he will get his toes trodden on, and he is apt to show fight under these circumstances. May I leave him here?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Frere; "that is, if you can persuade him to stay quietly, and bind him over to keep the peace till we return."

"That is soon accomplished," rejoined Lewis, and calling the dog to him, he dropped a glove on the floor and uttered some German word of command, when the well-trained animal immediately laid down with the glove between his huge paws.

"Caution your old lady not to interfere with the glove," he continued, "or Faust will assuredly throttle her."

"What, is he touchy on that head?" inquired Grandeville, poisoning himself on one leg while he endeavoured to kick the glove away with the other. A growl like that of an angry tiger, and the display of a set of teeth of which a dentist or a crocodile might equally have been proud, induced him to draw back his foot with rather more celerity than was altogether in keeping with the usual dignity of his movements.

"The dog has not such a bad notion of producing a moral impression," said Leicester, laughing. "Don't you think he might be useful to us to-night?"

"Ar—now, there is nothing I should like better than to take that glove away from him," observed Grandeville, casting a withering glance on Faust. "Ar—I wish I had time."

"I wish you had," returned Lewis dryly.

"Why, do you think it would be so mighty difficult?" retorted Grandeville.

"When Rudolph Arnheim, a fellow-student of mine, tried the experiment, I had some trouble in choking Faust off before the dog had quite throttled him," was the reply. "Rudolph is no child, and had a heavy wager depending on it."

"Ar—well, I can't see any great difficulty in the thing, but it depends on a man's nerve, of course. Now, are we ready?"

So saying, Marmaduke Grandeville, Esq., placed his hat firmly on his head, and with the gait of a heavy dragoon and the air of a conquering hero, marched nobly out of the apartment. Leicester

held back to allow Lewis to follow, then drawing Frere on one side, he said—

“Richard, I like your friend Arundel; he is a manly, intelligent young fellow, much too good to be bear-leader to a half-witted cub like this precious ward of old Grant’s; and if I were as rich as I am poor, I would do something better for him. Now, if he had but a few hundreds to go on with, matrimony would be the dodge for him. With such a face and figure as his, he might secure no end of a prize in the wife market; there’s a thoroughbred look about him which would tell with women amazingly.”

“He has all the makings of a fine character in him,” replied Frere, “but he is proud and impetuous; and pride and poverty are ill companions, though they often go together.”

“Do they?” replied Leicester. “Well, I am poor enough for anything, as a very large majority of the metropolitan tradesmen know to their cost, but, upon my word, I am not proud. Any man may give me a good dinner, and I’ll eat it,—good wine, and I’ll drink it; I never refuse a stall at the Opera, though the bone may belong to an opulent tallow-chandler; and there is not a woman in England with £150,000 that I would not marry to-morrow if she would have me. No! I may be poor, but you can’t call me proud.” And placing his arm through that of his cousin, they descended to the street together, and rejoined Lewis and his companion.

CHAPTER V.

IS OF A DECIDEDLY WARLIKE CHARACTER.

THE place of rendezvous for the “gallant defenders of the British constitution,” as Leicester had designated the little party, was a cigar shop in the immediate vicinity of the building in which the meeting was to be held. On their arrival they perceived that the shop was already occupied by several young men, who were lounging over the counter, bandying jests and compliments with a ringleted young lady, who appeared thoroughly self-possessed and quite equal to the part she had to perform, having through all her pretty coquetries a shrewd eye to business, and reserving her most fascinating smiles for the most inveterate smokers.

As Grandeville entered the shop, which he did with a most lordly and dignified air, he was welcomed with general acclamation.

“All hail, Macbeth!” exclaimed a thin young man, with a white greatcoat and a face to match, throwing himself into a tragedy attitude.

“Most noble commander!” began another of the group. “Most illustrious De Grandeville! how is——”

“Your anxious mother?” interrupted a short, muscular little fellow, with as rich a brogue as ever claimed Cork for its county.

"Hush! be quiet, Pat; we have no time for nonsense now, man," cried a tall youth with a profusion of light curling hair, a prominent hooked nose, a merry smile, and a pair of wicked grey eyes, which appeared to possess the faculty of looking in every direction at once. "You are late, De Grandeville," he added, coming forward.

"Ar—no, sir; five minutes good by the Horse Guards. Ar—I should have been here sooner, but I have been—ar—recruiting, you see. Mr. Bracy, Mr. Frere, Mr. Arundel—you know Leicester?"

"Delighted to see such an addition to our forces," replied Bracy, bowing; then shaking hands with Leicester, he added in an undertone, "Walk with me when we start; I have a word to say to you."

Leicester nodded in assent, and then proceeded to accost others of the party with whom he was acquainted.

"Ar—now, gentlemen, will you please to attend to orders?" began Grandeville, raising his voice.

"Hear, hear!" cried the pale young man, faintly.

"We'll do it bettther if you'd be houldin' yer tongue, maybe," interposed the hero from Cork, who, being interpreted, was none other than Lieutenant McDermott of the Artillery, believed by the Commander-in-Chief to be at that very moment on duty at Woolwich.

"Ar—you are to divide yourselves into three or four bodies."

"Faith, we must get blind drunk, and see double twice over then, before we can do that," remarked the son of Erin argumentatively.

"Now, Paddy, be quiet," said Bracy, soothingly; "you know you never got so far in your arithmetic as vulgar fractions, so you can't be supposed to understand the matter."

A somewhat forcible rejoinder was drowned by Grandeville, who continued, in his most sonorous tone: "Ar—you will then proceed to the hall of meeting, and make your way quietly to the right side, as near the platform as possible. There—keep together, and attract as little attention as you can, and Mr. Bracy will transmit such directions to you as circumstances may render advisable. Do you all clearly understand?"

A general shout of assent, varied by a muttered "Not in the slightest degree," from McDermott, was followed by the order, "Then march!" and in another moment the party were *en route*. The pale young man, who was in his secret soul rather alarmed than otherwise, had attached himself firmly to Frere, with whom he was slightly acquainted, and who he thought would take care of him, so Lewis was left to pair off with Leicester.

As they proceeded, the latter began: "Depend upon it, there's some trick in all this, probably intended for Grandeville's benefit; that fellow Bracy is one of the most inveterate practical jokers extant, and he seems particularly busy to-night; he's a clerk in the Home Office, and Grandeville believes in him to an immense extent; but here he comes. Well, Bracy, what is it, man?"

"Is your friend safe?" inquired Bracy aside, glancing at Lewis as he spoke.

"The most cautious man in London," was the reply, "and one who

appreciates our noble commander thoroughly; so now allow us a peep behind the scenes."

"Well, the matter stands thus," returned Bracy. "I was walking with Duke Grandeville one night about three weeks ago, when we chanced to encounter the good folks coming away from one of these meetings; they were nothing very formidable—a fair sample of young Newgate Street, youthful patriots from Snow Hill, embryo republicans of St. Paul's Churchyard, Barbican, and other purlieus of Cockaignia, led by a few choice spirits—copying clerks, who hide their heroism from the light of day in lawyers' offices, booksellers' shopmen from the Row, who regard themselves as distinguished literary characters, and prate of the sovereignty of the press, and the like. Well, as might be expected, they discoursed most ferociously, and the Duke, over-hearing some of their conversation, was deeply scandalised, and fancied he had discovered a second Cato Street conspiracy. The thing appeared to promise fun, so I encouraged him in the idea, and we attended the next meeting, when they talked the usual style of radical clap-trap. Everything was an abuse—the rich were tyrants, the poor slaves, and property required transferring (*i.e.*, from its present possessors to themselves); they knew they never should be kings, so they cried down monarchy; but they trusted that, with strong lungs and good-luck, they might become paid delegates, therefore they clamoured for a republic. There was much noise, but no talent; sanguinary theories were discussed, which they had neither minds nor means to enable them to carry out; in short, the place is one of those innocent sedition shops which act as safety valves to carry off popular discontent, and ensure the health and vigour of the British constitution. Of course, however, Grandeville did not see it in that point of view, and from that night forth he became positively rabid on the subject; so it entered the heads of some of us that we might improve the occasion by persuading him that he might, through me, communicate information to the Home Office (I need scarcely tell you that it never reached the authorities there), and we have led him on sweetly and easily, till he positively believes that he is to be at the Hall to-night as an accredited government agent, with full powers to suppress the meeting, and I know not what else."

"But surely you'll get into a fearful row," urged Leicester.

"We are safe for a bit of a shindy, no doubt," was the cool reply; "in fact I do not consider that the thing would go off properly without it, so I brought an Irishman with me to render it inevitable; but I have bribed a doorkeeper, and let the worst come to the worst, we can easily fight our way out."

"To be sure we can," exclaimed Lewis, "lick a hundred such fellows as you have described. This is glorious fun; I would not have missed it for the world."

Bracy glanced at him for a moment with a look of intense approval, then shaking him warmly by the hand, he said, "Sir, I'm delighted to make your acquaintance; your sentiments do you honour, sir. Are you much accustomed to rows of this nature, may I ask?"

"I have been resident in Germany for the last three years," was the

reply; "and although they have a very fair notion of an *émeute* after their own fashion, they don't understand the use of the fist as we do."

"There are two grand rules for crowd-fighting," returned Bracy. "First, make play with your elbows, Cockneys' ribs are as sensitive as niggers' shins; secondly, if it comes to blows, strike at their faces, and never waste your strength; but when you *do* make a hit, drop your man if possible; it settles him, and frightens the rest. Here we are!" So saying, he turned into a kind of passage which led to an open door, through which they passed into the body of the hall.

It was a large room with a vaulted ceiling, and appeared capable of holding from five to six hundred persons. At the farther end of it was a platform, raised some feet, and divided from the rest of the hall by a stout wooden railing. The room was lighted with gas, and considerably more than half filled. Although the majority of the audience appeared to answer the description Bracy had given of them, yet along the sides of the apartment were ranged numbers of sturdy artisans and craftsmen, amongst whom many a stalwart form and stern determined visage might be detected.

"There are some rather awkward customers here to-night," whispered Leicester. "If we chance to get black eyes, Arundel, we must postpone our visit to the General to-morrow."

"The man that gives me a black eye shall have something to remember it by, at all events," returned Lewis quickly.

"Hush! that fellow heard you," said Leicester.

Lewis glanced in the direction indicated, and met the sinister gaze of a tall, heavy-built mechanic, in a rough greatcoat, who frowned menacingly when he found that he was observed. Lewis smiled carelessly in reply, and proceeded after Bracy up the room. When he had passed, the man, still keeping his eye upon him, quitted his seat and followed at some little distance. On reaching the upper end of the room they perceived Grandeville and two or three others, among whom was McDermott, on the platform, while Frere and the rest of their party had congregated on and near a flight of five or six steps leading to it from the body of the hall.

"Bravo, Grandeville!" observed Bracy, in an undertone, to Leicester. "Do you mark that! he has secured a retreat—good generalship, very. I shall have to believe in him if he goes on as well as he has commenced. Hark! they are beginning to give tongue."

As he concluded, a little fat man came forward and said a good deal about the honour which had been done him in being allowed the privilege of opening the evening's proceedings, to which he appended a long and utterly incomprehensible account of the objects of the meeting. His zeal was evident, but Nature had never intended him for an orator, and the chances of life had fitted him with a short husky cough, so that nobody was very sorry when he ceded the rostrum to his "esteemed friend, if he might be allowed to say so (which he was), Jabez Broadcorn." This Jabez Broadcorn was evidently a great gun, and his coming forward created no small sensation. He was a tall, gaunt-looking man, with straight weak hair and an unhealthy

complexion; but his great feature, in every sense of the word, was his mouth.

It *was* a mouth, not only for mutton, but for every other purpose to which that useful aperture could be applied; at present it was to be devoted to the task of conveying its owner's mighty thoughts, in appropriate language, to the eager listeners who surrounded him.

This gentleman then, having, by dint of drawing in his lips and thrusting them out again, and rolling his eyes so fearfully as to suggest a sudden attack of English cholera, got up his steam to the required height, proceeded to inform the assembly that they were, individually and collectively, free and enlightened citizens of the great metropolis of Europe, prepared to recognise their sacred rights, and resolved to go forth as one man to assert and maintain them. Having imparted this information (through his nose, for the greater effect), he began to ask himself a species of Pinnock's Catechism, so to speak, which ran somewhat after the following fashion:—

"And why am I here to-night? Because I love profit? No. Because I love personal distinction? No. Because I love my country? Yes. Because I would not see her children slaves? Yes. Because purse-proud oppressors, revelling in their wealth, trample on the honest poor man? Yes."

Having said by heart several pages of this, in which he was exceedingly well up, and which he rattled off most fluently, he continued—

"But such tyranny shall not always be tolerated. British freemen, whose proud boast it is that they have never borne a foreign yoke, shall no longer crouch beneath a despotic rule at home. The atrocious barbarities of a brutal poor-law, which taxes honest householders to furnish salaried ruffians with power to drag the half-eaten crust from the famished jaws of helpless poverty——"

(A slight sensation was here occasioned by McDermott mentioning for the benefit of the meeting in general, and the orator himself in particular, his conviction that the last sentence was "very pretty indeed," together with a polite inquiry as to whether he could not be so kind as to say it again. Peace being restored after sundry shouts of "Turn him out!" "Shame!" etc., the orator resumed)—

"Let them build their bastiles, let them tear the wife from her husband, the mother from her child; let them crowd their prison-houses with the honest sons of labour whom their brutality has forced into crime—the poor man need never dread starvation while the hulks hunger and the gallows gapes for him—but a day of retribution is at hand; let the tyrants tremble beneath their gilded roofs—those unjust usurpers of the soil—the poor man's bitterest foes, the landed gentry, as they arrogantly style themselves, must be cut off and rooted out."

"Pretty strong, that!" observed Bracy, in a whisper.

"Ar—this won't do, you know!" returned Grandeville, in an equally low voice. "I must, really—ar—interfere."

"Better hear him out," rejoined Bracy, "and then get up and address them yourself." To which suggestion, after a slight remon-

strance, the former agreed; but such a shining light as Mr. Jabez Broadcorn was not to be put out as quickly as they desired; he was the great card of the evening, and knew it, and prolonged his speech for a good three-quarters of an hour, during which time he theoretically dethroned the Queen, abolished the Lords and Commons, seated a National Convention in St. Stephen's, and made all the rich poor, and the poor both rich and happy, whilst he practically rendered himself so hoarse as to be nearly inaudible; for which gallant exertions in the cause of liberty he received the tumultuous applause of the meeting, together with Lieut. McDermott's expressed conviction that he was "a broth of a boy entirely," together with an anxious inquiry, "whether his mother had many more like him."

When Broadcorn retired from the rostrum there appeared some misunderstanding and confusion as to his successor; taking advantage of which, Grandeville looked at Bracy, who nodded, adding, "Now's your time! Go in, and win;" then, catching a cadaverous-looking individual who was about to advance by the shoulders, and twisting him round, he exclaimed, "Now, my man, stand out of the way, will you? This gentleman is going to address the company." He next thrust Grandeville forward, and patting him encouragingly on the back, left him to his own devices. That heroic gentleman, having bowed to his audience with much grace and dignity, waved his hand to command attention, and began as follows:—

"Ar—listen to me, my friends! Ar—hem—I am prepared to admit—that is, it is impossible to deny—that many great and serious evils exist in the complicated social fabric of this glorious country. The vast increase of population——"

"Owing to the introduction of chloroform," suggested Bracy.

"Though slightly checked by——"

"The alarming consumption of Morrison's Pills," interposed the Irishman——

"The wise facilities afforded for emigration," continued Grandeville, not heeding these interruptions, "is one chief cause of the poverty and distress which, though greatly exaggerated by the false statements of evil-disposed and designing persons (groans and cries of 'Hear!'), are to be found even in this metropolis, beneath the fostering care of an enlightened and paternal government (increasing murmurs of dissatisfaction). But if you believe that these evils are likely to be redressed by such measures as have been pointed out to you this evening, or that anarchy and rebellion can lead to any other result than misery and ruin—ar—I tell you, that you are fearfully mistaken! Ar—as a man, possessed of—ar—no inconsiderable influence—and ar—intimately connected with those powers against which you are madly arraying yourselves, I warn you!"

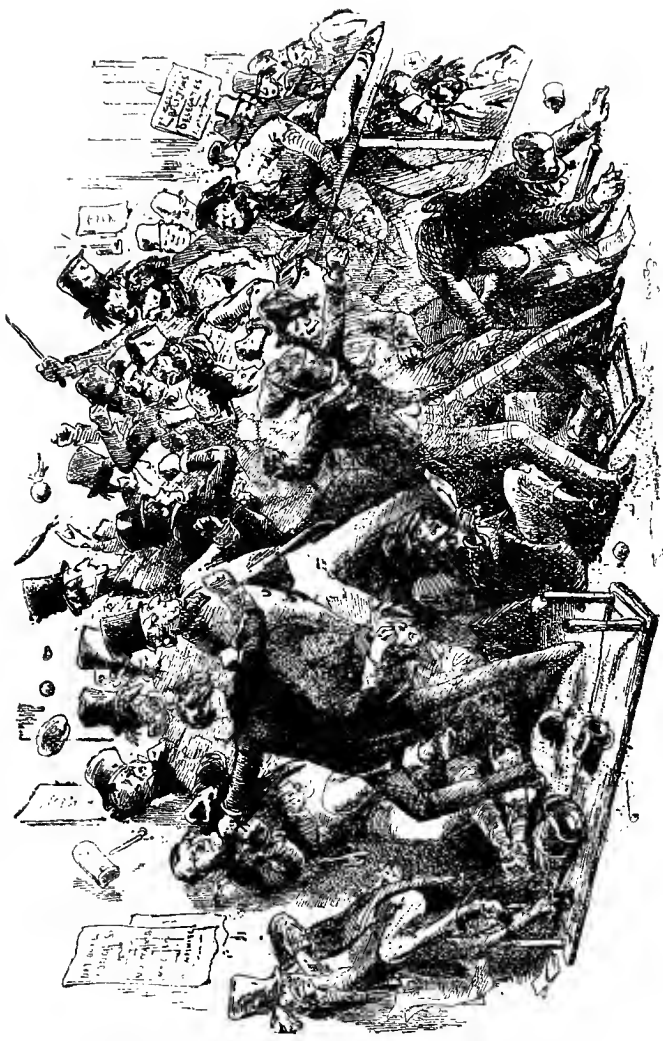
Here the excitement and dissatisfaction, which had been rapidly increasing, reached a pitch which threatened to render the speaker inaudible; and amid cries of "Who is he?"—"an informer!"—"government spy!"—"turn him out!"—"throw him over!" several persons rose from their seats and attempted to force their way on to the platform, but were kept back by Lewis and others of Grandeville's

party, who, as has been already mentioned, had taken possession of the flight of steps, which afforded the only legitimate means of access from the body of the hall.

Undisturbed by these hostile demonstrations, Grandeville continued, at the top of his voice,—“I warn you that you are provoking an unequal struggle,—that you are bringing upon yourselves a fearful retribution. Even now I am armed with authority to disperse this meeting—to——”

What more he would have added the reader is not fated to learn, for at this moment the man in the rough greatcoat, who had followed Lewis from the entrance of the room, exclaiming, “Come on, we are not going to stand this, you know; never mind the steps,” seized the railing of the platform, and drawing himself up, sprang over, followed by several others. In an instant all was confusion. Grandeville, taken in some degree by surprise, after knocking down a couple of his assailants, was overpowered, and, amid cries of “throw him over,” hurried to the edge of the platform; here, grasping the rail with both hands, he struggled violently to prevent the accomplishment of their purpose.

“Come along, boys! we must rescue him,” exclaimed Bracy; and suiting the action to the word, he bounded forward, and hitting right and left, reached the scene of conflict. Lewis and the others, abandoning the steps, followed his example, and the row became general. For some minutes the uproar was terrific; blows were given and received; blood began to flow from sundry noses; and certain eyes that had begun the evening blue, brown, or grey, as the case might be, assumed a hue dark as Erebus. As for Lewis, he knocked down one of the fellows who had hold of Grandeville; then he picked up the Irishman, who of course had singled out and attacked the biggest man in the crowd (none other indeed than the rough-coated patriot, who appeared a sort of leader among them), and been immediately felled by him to the ground; then he assisted Frere in extricating the pale-faced youth from three individuals of questionable honesty, who were availing themselves of the confusion to empty his pockets; as he did so he felt himself seized with a grasp of iron, and turning his head, found he was collared by the gigantic leader. A violent but ineffectual effort to free himself only served to convince him that in point of strength he was no match for his antagonist, who, regarding him with a smile of gratified malice, exclaimed, “Now then, young feller, I’ve been a-waiting to get hold of you. How about a black eye now?” As he spoke he drew him forward with one hand and struck at him savagely with the other. Avoiding the blow by suddenly dodging aside, Lewis closed with his adversary, and inserting his knuckles within the folds of his neckcloth, tightened it, until in self-defence, and in order to avoid strangulation, the fellow was forced to loosen his grasp of Lewis’s collar. The instant he felt himself free, Lewis, giving the neckcloth a final twist, and at the same time pressing his knuckles into the man’s throat, so as for the moment almost to throttle him, stepped back a couple of paces, and springing forward again before the other had time to recover himself, hit up under his



THE CHARTIST ROW.

guard and succeeded in planting a stinging and well-directed blow exactly between his eyes; this, followed by a similar application rather lower on the face, settled the matter. Reeling backwards, his antagonist lost his footing and fell heavily to the ground, dragging one of his companions down with him in a futile attempt to save himself. The fall of their leader threw a damp on the spirits of the others; and although those in the rear were still clamorous with threats and vociferations, the members of the crowd in more immediate proximity to the little party showed small inclination to renew the attack.

"Now's our time for getting away," said Bracy. "Make a bold push for the door."

"Ar—I should say," rejoined Grandeville, one of whose eyes was completely closed from the effects of a blow, and whose coat was hanging about him in ribands, "let us despatch one of our party for the police and military, and stand firm and maintain our ground till they come up, then capture the ringleaders and clear the room."

"Nonsense," said Leicester, who, despite his regard for his wardrobe, had behaved most spiritedly during the skirmish. "We shall all be murdered before they appear; besides" (he added aside to Bracy), "it will be making much too serious a business of it; we should get into some tremendous scrape."

"Yes, that's true," said Bracy; then turning to Grandeville, he added, "I don't think my instructions would bear us out if we were to go any further. Remember, we were only to make a pacific demonstration."

"And faith, if breaking heads, and getting a return in kind, comes under that same denomination, it's a pretty decent one we've made already, 'pon me conscience," put in McDermott, wiping away the blood that was still trickling from a cut in his forehead.

While these remarks were bandied from one to another, the party had contrived to make their way from the platform, and were now in the body of the room, striving to push through the crowd towards the side door. This at every step became more and more difficult, till at length they were so completely hemmed in that further progression became impossible, and it was evident that a fresh attack upon them was meditated. Fortunately, however, they were not far from the point of egress, and Bracy, having caught the eye of his ally the door-keeper, who was on the alert, exclaimed, "Now, Grandeville, we must fight our way through these fellows and gain the door; there's nothing for it but a spirited charge. You and I, Frere and his friend, and Paddy had better go first as a sort of wedge."

"Ar—head the column and break the enemy's ranks, ar—yes, are you all ready? CHARGE!"

As he gave the word they rushed forward in a compact body, and knocking down and pushing aside all who opposed them, succeeded in reaching the door. Here a short delay occurred while Bracy and his friend were opening it, and several of their late antagonists, irritated at the prospect of their escape, incited the others to attack them, so that before their egress was secured even the Irish lieutenant had had fighting enough to satisfy him, and the pale young man,

having long since given himself up as a lost mutton, actually fainted with fear and over-exertion, and was dragged from under the feet of the combatants and carried out by Frere and Lewis, but for whom his mortal career would then and there have ended.

How, as they emerged into the street, a party of the police arrived and caused more confusion and more broken heads; and how Grandeville and the Irishman on the one hand, and sundry Chartists, with Lewis's late antagonist among them, on the other, were jointly and severally taken into custody and marched to the station-house, where they spent the night; and how Leicester contrived just in the nick of time to catch an intelligent cab, into which he, Lewis, Frere, and the fainting victim with the pallid physiognomy compressed themselves, and were conveyed rapidly from the scene of action, it boots not to relate: suffice it to say that a certain barrel of oysters, flanked by a detachment of pint bottles of stout, which had taken up their position on Frere's dining-table during the absence of its master, sustained an attack about half-past eleven o'clock that night which proved that the mode in which their assailants had passed the evening had in no way impaired their respective appetites.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH LEWIS ARUNDEL SKETCHES A COW, AND THE AUTHOR DRAWS A YOUNG LADY.

IT was about noon on the day following the events narrated in the last chapter. Frere had departed to his office at the scientific institution some two hours since, and Lewis and Faust were looking out of the window, when a well-appointed cab dashed round the corner of a cross street, and a pair of lavender-coloured kid-gloves drew up a splendid bay horse, who arched his proud neck and champed the bit, impatient of delay, till a young male child in livery coat and top-boots rolled off the back of the vehicle and stationed itself before the animal's nose, which act of self-devotion appeared to mesmerise him into tranquillity, and afforded the occupant of the cab time to spring out and knock at Frere's door. Five minutes more saw Leicester and Lewis seated side by side and driving rapidly in the direction of Park Crescent.

"I don't know how you feel this morning, Arundel," began Leicester; "but positively when I first woke I could scarcely move. I'm black and blue all over, I believe."

"I must confess to being rather stiff," was the reply, "and my left hand is unproducibile. I cut my knuckles against the nose of that tall fellow when I knocked him down, and shall be forced to wear a glove till it heals."

"You did that uncommonly well," returned Leicester; "the man

was as strong as Hercules, and vicious into the bargain. He evidently had heard what you said about a black eye, and meant mischief. I was coming to help you when you finished him off."

"It would have been most provoking to have been disfigured just at this time," rejoined Lewis. "One could not very well go to propose oneself as a mentor for youth with a black eye obtained in something nearly akin to a street row."

"No," said Leicester; "the General would consider our last night's exploit as dreadfully *infra dig.* He is quite one of the old school, and reckons Sir Charles Grandison a model for gentlemen. You must be careful to avoid the free-and-easy style of the present day with him; but I think you'll suit him exactly; there's naturally something of the *preux chevalier, héros de roman* cut about you that will go down with him amazingly."

"In plain English, you consider me stiff and affected," returned Lewis. "Do not scruple to tell me if it is so."

"Stiff, yes; affected, no," was the rejoinder. "Indeed, your manner is unusually simple and natural when you thaw a little, but at first you are—well, I hardly know how to describe it; but there is something about you unlike the men one usually meets. You have a sort of half-defiant way of looking at people, a sort of 'you'd better not insult me, sir' expression. I don't know that I should have observed it towards myself, but it was your manner to Grandeville that particularly struck me. I have not annoyed you by my frankness?" he added interrogatively, finding that Lewis did not reply. Regardless of this question, Lewis remained silent for a minute or two, then suddenly turning to his companion, and speaking in a low, hurried voice, he said—

"Can you conceive no reason for such a manner? Is there not enough in my position to account for that, ay, and more? By birth I am any man's equal. My father was of an old family, a captain in the Austrian service, and in the highest sense of the word a gentleman. I have received a gentleman's education. Up to the present time I have associated with gentlemen on terms of equality, and now suddenly, through no fault of my own, I am in effect a beggar. The very errand we are upon proves it. Through the kindness of Frere and of yourself,—a stranger,—I am about to receive a favourable recommendation to some proud old man as a hired servant; for though in name it may not be so, in fact I shall be nought but a hireling! Is it strange then that I view men with suspicion? that I am watchful lest they attempt to refuse me the amount of courtesy due to those who, having never forfeited their own self-respect, are entitled to the respect of others?"

He paused, and removing his hat, allowed the cold breeze to blow freely around his heated brow. Leicester, who, despite his foppery, was thoroughly kind-hearted, being equally surprised and distressed at the burst of feeling his words had called forth, hastened to reply.

"My dear fellow, I really am—that is, 'pon my word, I had no idea you looked upon the affair in this light. I can assure you, I think you quite mistake the matter; a tutorship is considered a very gentlemanly occupation. If I had any work in me, I'm not at all sure I might

not—that is, it would be a very sensible thing of me to look out for something of the kind myself. Stanhope Jones, who was up at Trinity with me, and about the fastest man of his year, ran through his fortune, got a tutorship in Lord Puzzletête's family, went abroad with the eldest cub, and picked up a prize widow at Pisa, with tin enough to set the leaning tower straight again, if she'd had a fancy to do so."

During this well-meant attempt at consolation Lewis had had time to come to the conclusion that he was in the position of that unwise individual who wore "his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at;" or, in plain English, that he had been betrayed into a display of feeling before a man incapable of appreciating or understanding it; and a less agreeable conviction at which to arrive we scarcely know. Nothing, however, remained but to make the best of it, which he accordingly did, by admitting the possibility that there might be much truth in Leicester's view of the case, and changing the subject by saying, "Now I want you to give me a peep at the *carte du pays* of the unknown region I am about to explore. I think I pretty well comprehend the General from your description. Of what other members does the family consist?"

"Ah! yes, of course you must be curious to know. Well, the *dramatis personæ* is somewhat limited. First and foremost, the General,—you comprehend him, you say?" Lewis made a sign in the affirmative, and Leicester continued: "Then we have an awful personage, who I expect will be a severe trial to you—Miss Livingstone; she is a relation, an aunt I think, of the General's late wife, who lives with him and keeps his house, and was the terror of my boyhood whenever I was staying down at Broadhurst. She never was over young, I believe; at least I can't imagine her anything but middle-aged, and she must now be sixty or thereabouts. For the rest, she looks as if she had swallowed a poker, and, by some mysterious process of assimilation, become imbued with its distinguishing characteristics; for she is very stiff, very cold, and as far as I know utterly impenetrable, but of a stirring disposition withal, which leads her to interfere with everybody and everything. Lastly, there is my cousin Annie, the General's only daughter; she inherits her mother's beauty, her father's pride, her great-aunt's determination to have her own way, and the devil's own love of teasing. To set against all this, I believe her to be thoroughly good and amiable, and everything of that kind; at all events she is a most bewitching girl, and bids fair, under judicious management, to become a very charming woman. I fancy her mission is to reform my brother Bellefield and render him a steady married man, and I wish her joy of it. She comes into her mother's fortune when she is of age, and the respective governors have set their hearts upon the match."

"And what says Lord Bellefield?" inquired Lewis listlessly.

"Oh, Bell reckons she won't be of age, and that the match can't come off these four years, by which time he expects to be so hard up that he must marry somebody; and as there will be plenty of the needful, she will suit his book as well as any other."

"The young lady, of course, approves?" continued Lewis dreamily, untying a knot in the thong of Leicester's whip.

"Catch a woman refusing a coronet," returned Leicester, as he pulled up at a house in Park Crescent so suddenly as almost to throw the bay on his haunches.

"General Grant begs you will walk upstairs, Mr. Leicester. He is engaged at present, but desired me to say he particularly wishes to see you," was the reply made by a most aristocratic butler to Leicester's inquiry whether his master was at home. "Keep the bay moving, Tim. Now, Arundel, turn to the right—that's it," and suiting the action to the word, Charley the indolent leisurely descended from the cab, and crossing the "marble hall," lounged up a wide staircase followed by Lewis.

"Silence and solitude," he continued, opening the door of a large drawing-room handsomely furnished. "I hope they won't be long before they introduce us to the luncheon-table. Oysters are popularly supposed to give one an appetite; but the natives we demolished at Frere's last night must have been sadly degenerate, for I declare to you I could scarcely get through my breakfast this morning. Ah! what have we here?—a water-colour landscape in a semi-chaotic condition. Annie has been sketching, as sure as fate. I'll introduce a few masterly touches and surprise her." So saying he seated himself at the table and began dabbling with a brush.

"By Jove, I've done it now!" he exclaimed in a tone of consternation, after a minute's pause. "Just look here; I thought I would insert the trunk of a tree in the foreground, and the confounded brush had got red in it, so I have made a thing like a lobster and spoiled the drawing."

"I think, if you wish, I could turn it into a cow, and so get you out of the scrape," suggested Lewis, smiling at his companion's guilty countenance.

"My dear fellow, the very thing," exclaimed Leicester, hastily rising and thrusting Lewis into his seat; "let's have a cow, by all means. That's famous," he continued, as with a few graphic strokes Lewis converted the red daub into the semblance of an animal. "Bravo! make her an eye—now the horns—what a fascinating quadruped! Where's the tail to come?"

"You would not see the tail in the position in which the cow is supposed to be lying," remonstrated Lewis.

"Still, it would make it more natural," urged Leicester. "As a personal favour, just to oblige me, stretch a point and give her a tail."

"There, then, I've twisted it under her leg," said Lewis, making the desired addition; "but depend upon it, there never was a cow's tail so situated."

"All the greater proof of your talent," was the reply. "The ideal is what you artists (for I see you are one) are always raving about, and this is a specimen of it."

So engrossed had the two young men been with their occupation that they had not observed the entrance of a third person. The new-

comer was that most charming of all created beings, a very lovely girl of seventeen.

As every poet since Homer has done his utmost to clothe in fitting language a description of the best specimen of the class which it may have been his hap to meet with, and as no man in his senses would exchange half-an-hour of the society of one of the originals for all the fanciful descriptions of women that ever were written, we would fain be excused from adding one more to the number; and were all our readers of what grammarians most ungallantly term "the wortbier gender," we should cut the matter short by begging each man to imagine the damsel in question exactly like the "unexpressive she" who is, for the time being, queen of his soul. But as we flatter ourselves certain bright eyes will sparkle and coral lips smile over this "o'er true tale," and as we have already been asked by "oceans" of young ladies, "What is the heroine to be like?" we will e'en make a virtue of necessity and give a *catalogue raisonné* of her many perfections.

Annie Grant, then (for we'll have no disguise about the matter, but own at once that she it *was* who entered the drawing-room unperceived, and that she it *is* who is destined to play the heroine in this our drama of the Railroad of Life; and be it observed interparenthetically that we use the theatrical metaphor advisedly, for Shakespeare has told us that "all the world's a stage," and it is a matter of common notoriety that in the present day all stages have become railroads)—Annie Grant, then, we say, was rather above the middle height, though no one would have thought of pronouncing her tall; her gown of *mousseline—poil de—*psah! what are we thinking of?—she had not a gown on at all; how should she, when she was going to ride directly after luncheon? No, her habit, which fitted to perfection, was well calculated to set off her slight but singularly graceful figure to the best advantage. Her hair, which was braided in broad plaits for the greater convenience (seeing that ringlets under a riding-hat are an anomaly, not to say an abomination), was *really* auburn,—by which definition we intend to guard against the pale red, or warm, sand-coloured locks which usually pass current for the very rare but very beautiful tint we would particularise,—and if a poet had speculated as to the probability of some wandering sunbeam being imprisoned in its golden meshes, the metaphor, though fanciful, would not have been unapt. Delicate, regular features, large blue eyes, now dancing and sparkling with mischievous glee, now flashing with pride, a mouth like an expressive rosebud, a clear skin, with a warm glow of health painting each velvet cheek, but retreating from the snowy forehead, combined to form a whole on which to gaze was to admire.

This young lady, being such as we have described her, tripped lightly across the apartment till she had stationed herself behind her cousin Charles, and perceiving that both gentlemen were so preoccupied as not to have observed her approach, contrived, by standing on tiptoe and peeping over Leicester's shoulder, to witness the introduction of the cow of which we have already made honourable mention.

During the animated discussion on the tail question she nearly betrayed her presence by laughing outright; repressing the inclination, however, she retraced her steps, and had nearly succeeded in reaching the side door by which she had entered, when her habit, catching against a table, caused the overthrow of a piece of ornamental china and revealed her presence.

On hearing the sound, Lewis, recalled to a sense of his situation, and for the first time struck by the idea that, in touching the drawing, he had been guilty of an unwarrantable liberty, rose hastily from his seat, colouring crimson as he did so, from an agreeable mixture of shyness, mortification, and proud self-reproach. Leicester, on the other hand, with the *à-plomb* and presence of mind of a man of the world, turned leisurely, and whispering, "Keep your own counsel, there's no harm done," he advanced towards his cousin, saying with a nonchalant air, "You have stolen a march upon us, Annie. This gentleman and I called to see the General upon business, and as he seems resolved to afford us a practical lesson on the virtue of patience, I ventured to while away the time by showing my friend some of your sketches. By the way, let me introduce you. My cousin, Miss Grant—Mr. Arundel." Thus invoked, Lewis, who in order to atone to his wounded self-respect, had wrapped himself in his very coldest and haughtiest manner, and resembled a banished prince rather than an every-day Christian, advanced a few steps and acknowledged the introduction by a most Grandisonian inclination of the head.

The lady performed her part of the ceremony with an easy courtesy, into which perhaps an equal degree of hauteur was infused, although not the slightest effort was visible.

"Mr. Arundel is doubtless a judge of painting, and my poor sketches are by no means calculated to bear severe criticism," remarked Miss Grant demurely.

As Lewis remained silent, Leicester hastened to reply: "A judge! of course he is; he's just returned from Germany, the happy land where smoking, singing, and painting all come by nature."

"Indeed!" returned Miss Grant. "Then, if it is not too troublesome, perhaps I might ask Mr. Arundel's advice as to a sketch of Broadhurst I was attempting before your arrival; I left off in despair, because I could not manage anything for the foreground."

"Try an elephant," suggested Leicester; "it would have a grand effect, besides possessing the advantage of novelty, and filling up lots of space."

"Would you bring me the drawing, Charles?" returned his cousin. "I know too well the style of assistance I may expect from you in such matters. Who embellished my poor head of Minerva with a pair of *moustaches*?"

"I did," rejoined Leicester complacently, "and I am proud of it. Minerva was the goddess of war, and sported *moustaches* in virtue of her profession."

"Are you never going to give me the drawing, Charles?" asked Annie impatiently. "Positively, cousins are most uncourteous beings. Mr. Arundel, might I trouble you to hand me that sketch?"

Thus appealed to, Lewis had nothing for it but to comply, which he did accordingly, biting his lip with vexation at the *dénouement* which now appeared inevitable. But Leicester's resources were not yet exhausted; stretching out his hand before his cousin had received the drawing, he coolly took possession of it, saying, "I know you meant this drawing as a little surprise for me. You have heard me say how much I coveted a sketch of dear old Broadhurst, and so you have kindly made one for me. You have really done it extremely well! Who was it—Fielding—you have been learning of? Positively, you have caught his style!"

"Don't flatter yourself that I did you the honour of recollecting any such wish, even supposing you really uttered it in my hearing, of which I entertain grave doubts," returned Annie; "but if you particularly desire it I will make you a present of it when it is finished—if I could only manage that tiresome foreground!"

"I like it better without," was the reply. "There's nothing to interfere with the outline of the building, which stands forth in bold relief—and—eh!—well, what's the matter?"

During his speech his cousin had risen from her seat, and approaching him, caught sight of the drawing, which she had no sooner done than, raising a little white hand, she pointed to the intrusive cow and asked quietly, "Where did that come from?"

The comic perplexity of Leicester's face was irresistible to behold, as, with a glance at Lewis to secure his sympathy and co-operation, he was evidently about to adopt the cow at all hazards, when the door opened, and a tall, stately old man, with a military port and erect bearing, entered, and surveying the group with evident surprise, drew himself up still more stiffly, ere, with slow and measured steps, he advanced towards them.

IT WAS GENERAL GRANT!

CHAPTER VII.

WHEREIN THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO MISS LIVINGSTONE,
AND INFORMED WHO IS THE GREATEST MAN OF THE AGE.

"Ah! General," exclaimed Leicester, as he rose leisurely from the arm-chair in which he had been reclining, "I hope they have not disturbed you on our account. I was criticising one of Annie's sketches *pour passer le temps*—really she draws very nicely. Let me introduce Mr. Arundel, Mr. Frere's friend, about whom I wrote to you yesterday."

A stiff bow, acknowledged on Lewis's part by an equally haughty inclination of the head, was the result of this introduction, when General Grant observed—

"Mr. Frere is a man of whom I have a very high opinion, both on

account of his unusual intellectual attainments, and his manly, upright character. Have you been long acquainted with him, sir, may I ask?"

"He was my guide and protector when I first went to Westminster," replied Lewis, "and we have been close friends ever since."

"A most fortunate circumstance," remarked the General sententiously. "The mind of youth is easily impressible for good or evil, and unless such establishments are greatly altered for the better since my time, Satan has no lack of emissaries at a public school. Will you allow me a few minutes' private conversation with you, Mr. Arundel? The library is in this direction." So saying, General Grant opened the door with frigid courtesy, and signing to Lewis to precede him, followed with a stateliness of demeanour admirable to behold.

Scarcely had they left the room, when Annie, clapping her hands joyfully, exclaimed, "What a creature! why, he's as stiff and dignified as papa himself. Now then, Charley, tell me who he is, and all about him: we shall have Aunt Martha or somebody coming, and then I shall never know, and be obliged to die of curiosity. You are asleep, I believe."

"There you go—that's always the way with women," returned Leicester, speaking very slowly and with an exaggeration of his usual mode of pronunciation, which was something between a lisp and a drawl; "asking half-a-dozen questions in a breath, and resolved to get up a suicidal amount of curiosity if they are not as speedily answered. Why, my dear child, I would not speak as quickly as you do for any amount of money—at least any amount of money I should be at all likely to get for doing so."

"Now, Charley, don't be tiresome. Who is the man?" rejoined Annie, half pettishly. Then, seeing that her imperious manner only induced her cousin still further to tease her, she added, in an imploring tone, which no heart of any material softer than granite could resist, "You will tell me—won't you? I want to know so much, and I have had nothing to amuse me all day."

"There, do you hear that?" soliloquised Leicester, appealing to society in general. "Trust a woman to get her own way. If she can't scold you into giving it to her, she'll coax you. Well, you little torment, I suppose you must know all about it. The man, as you please to call him, is seeking the honourable post of bear-leader to the cub your father has the felicity of being guardian unto."

"What, a tutor for poor Walter!" rejoined Annie meditatively. "But surely he's a gentleman, is he not?"

"Very particularly and decidedly so, as far as I am a judge," returned Leicester, hooking a footstool towards him with his cane, and depositing his feet thereupon. "At least I dined and spent last evening in his company, and never wish to meet a better fellow."

"But," continued Annie, pursuing her train of reasoning, "if he is a gentleman, why does he want to go out as a tutor?"

"Because, unfortunately, there is a vulgar prejudice extant in this feeble-minded country that the necessaries of life, such as bread and

cheese, cigars, kid gloves, and the like, must be paid for—this requires money, whereof Arundel has little or none. Moreover, Richard Frere hinted at a mother and sister in the case, who likewise have to be supported.”

As he spoke a shade of deeper thought flitted across Annie's expressive features, and after a moment's pause she resumed.

“Now I understand his strange manner: he was mentally contrasting himself (he is evidently a proud man) and his position; it must indeed have been a struggle—and he does this for the sake of his mother and sister. Charley, do you know, I rather admire him.”

“Yes, I dare say you do; he's a decidedly good-looking fellow for the style of man; there's a thoroughbred air about him, and he carries himself well.”

“Psha! I am not talking of his appearance: except that he is tall and dark, I scarcely know what he is like,” returned Annie quickly. “No! I mean that there is something fine in the idea of a proud mind submitting to degradations and indignities for the sake of those it loves; bearing with a martyr-spirit the thousand hourly annoyances——” Checking herself suddenly, as she perceived upon her cousin's face something nearly akin to a contemptuous smile, Annie continued, “Charles, how stupid you are! I hate you!”

“Not possible,” was the cool reply. “Moreover, you have really no cause to do so. I assure you I was not exactly laughing at your sudden plunge into the sentimental; it was merely a notion which crossed my mind, that out of the thousand hourly annoyances by which poor Arundel is to be martyred, some nine hundred and fifty would originate in the caprices of a certain young lady who shall be nameless. In the monotony of life amid the leafy shades of Broadhurst, even teasing a tutor may be deemed a new and interesting variety, as the botanists have it. Seriously, though, you can coax the General to let him teach you German.”

“And embellish my water-colour sketches by the insertion of occasional cows, with impossible tails made to order—eh, cousin Charley?” returned Annie with an arch smile. “Give me my drawing, sir, and let me look at the creature. How well he has done it! I know a cow at Broadhurst with just such a face!”

“There's a world of speculation in the eye,” rejoined Leicester carelessly, though he was slightly surprised at the extent of her information respecting the “tail” debate; “the animal appears to be ruminating on the advisability of petitioning Parliament against the veal trade, or some other question of equal interest to the ‘milky mothers of the herd.’”

While Annie and her cousin thus gaily conversed, a very different scene was enacting in the library. During a short delay, occasioned by General Grant's being obliged to answer a note, Lewis had time to recollect himself, and to school the rebellious feelings which his conversation with Leicester and the other events of the morning had called into action. He thought of Rose and his mother, and of his determination that they at least should be spared all knowledge of the

real evils of poverty; and this reflection was for the time sufficient to efface every selfish consideration. Bringing his strength of will into play, he regained the most complete self-control, and even experienced a sort of morbid pleasure in the idea of voluntarily humiliating himself before the proud old man, whose clear, cold eye was occasionally raised from the note he was employed in writing to fix its scrutinising glance on Lewis's features.

Having sealed the missive and given it to a servant, he slowly approached the spot where Lewis was standing, and after a word or two of apology for having kept him waiting, began—

“I presume my nephew, Mr. Leicester, has made you in some degree acquainted with the nature of the circumstances in which I am at present placed, and of the necessity which renders me anxious to secure the services of some gentleman as tutor to my ward, Sir Walter Desborough?”

“Mr. Leicester informed me that the young gentleman's education had been neglected, and that his mind was singularly undeveloped,” replied Lewis, choosing the least offensive terms in which he might express his conviction that the youth in question was rather a fool than otherwise.

“Yes, sir, though it is even worse than you describe,” returned the General. “In fact it depends upon the degree of success which may attend the efforts which must now be made whether Sir Walter Desborough can ever be considered capable of managing his own affairs, or able to take that place in society to which his rank and fortune would naturally entitle him. You perceive, therefore, that the post of tutor will be one of much trust and importance, and the duties attending it most onerous. Mr. Frere has written so high a character of your various attainments that I cannot but feel perfectly satisfied of your competency; but you are very young, and as I should, in the event of your undertaking the charge, expect a strict performance of your duties, it is only fair to inform you that I conceive they may be irksome in the extreme. What is your feeling on the subject?”

Lewis paused for a moment in thought, and then replied—

“I will be frank with you, sir. Were I free to act as I chose, such an office as you describe would be one of the last I should select; but the welfare of others depends upon my exertions, and I have determined to refuse no occupation not unworthy a gentleman which will enable me to render the necessary assistance to my family. If, therefore, you consider me fitted to undertake the charge of your ward, I am willing to do so, and to fulfil the duties of such a situation to the best of my ability, on one condition.”

“What is that?” inquired General Grant quickly.

“That I may be allowed to pursue whatever system I may deem best fitted to attain the desired end, without the interference of any one, and may be accountable for my conduct to you alone.”

“Rather a singular request, young gentleman,” returned the General, knitting his brows.

“My reason for making it is easily explained, sir,” replied Lewis,

firmly but respectfully. "Unless such permission is accorded me, I feel certain all my efforts would prove unavailing: I must have full power to do what I think right, or I could not act at all, and should have undertaken a duty which I should be incompetent to perform."

"Well, sir, there is truth in what you say," replied General Grant, after a moment's consideration. "I like you none the worse for speaking in a manly, straightforward manner. It is my intention to go down to Broadhurst in a day or two: you shall accompany me; and if, after seeing my ward, you are still willing to undertake the task of conducting his education, I shall be happy to entrust him to your care, upon the conditions you have proposed. Your salary will be £300 a year. This, you are aware, is unusually high, but the case is a peculiar one, and money, fortunately, a very secondary consideration. An entire suite of rooms will be devoted to the use of yourself and your pupil, and a horse kept for you, that you may accompany him in his rides. Do these arrangements meet your wishes?"

Lewis bowed his head in token of acknowledgment, and said, "I have one other request to make. I brought a Livonian wolf-hound with me from Germany; he is much attached to me, and I should be unwilling to part from him."

"Bring him with you, sir," returned the General, his lip slightly curling with a sarcastic smile; "a dog more or less will make little difference in such an establishment as that at Broadhurst. And now, if you will give me the pleasure of your company at luncheon, I shall be happy to introduce you to my relative, Miss Livingstone, who does me the honour to preside over my household. My daughter, I believe, you have already seen;" and as he spoke he led the way to the dining-room, where the rest of the party were already assembled.

Miss Livingstone, who scrutinised Lewis as if she suspected him of belonging to that ingenious fraternity yclept the swell mob, was, in appearance, a very awful old lady indeed. The nearest approach we can make to a description of her features is to say that they bore a marked (with the small-pox) resemblance to those of Minerva *and* her owl; the sternness of that utilitarian goddess—the Miss Martineau of Olympus—and the sapient stupidity of the so-called bird of wisdom, finding their exact counterpart in Miss Livingstone's time-honoured physiognomy. This lady was appareled after a strange and imposing mode, as behoved a spinster of such orthodox station and ferociously virtuous propriety as the General's female commander-in-chief. Minerva's helmet was modernised into a stupendous fabric, wherein starch, muslin, and ribbon of an unnatural harshness struggled upwards in a pyramid, whence pointing with stiffened ends innumerable, suggestive of any amount of porcupines, they appeared ready and anxious to repel or impale society at large. A triangle of spotless lawn supplied the place of the breastplate beneath which Jove's daughter was accustomed to conceal her want of heart; and a silk gown of an uncomfortable shade of grey, made so scanty as to render at first sight the hypothesis of a mermaidic termination conceivable, completed the costume of this immaculate old lady.

Having apparently satisfied herself that Lewis had no immediate

design upon the spoons and forks, she condescended to afford him the meteorological information that although the sunshine might delude the unwary into believing it to be a fine day, she had received private information that the weather was not to be relied upon: after promulgating which opinion she placed herself at the head, and assumed the direction of, the luncheon-table.

Charley Leicester appeared to be the only individual of the party insensible to a certain freezing influence, which might be specified as one of Miss Livingstone's most characteristic attributes. Having exerted himself to supply that lady with every possible adjunct she could require, and seduced her into an amount of Cayenne pepper which afterwards subjected her to considerable physical suffering, he began—

"I was present, a day or two ago, Miss Livingstone, when a question was started as to what man of modern times had been the greatest benefactor to his race. It opened a mine of very curious speculation, I can assure you."

"I do not doubt it, Charles," returned Miss Livingstone; "and I am glad to learn that the young men of the present day employ their time in such profitable discussions. What decision did you arrive at?"

"Well, ma'am," resumed Leicester gravely, "there was of course much difference of opinion. James Watt had rather a strong party in his favour, but an ex-railway director was present who had lost £10,000 on the Do-em-and-Foot-in-it Line, and he blackballed him. Lord John was proposed; but some of the men who took in *Punch* laughed so immoderately when his name was mentioned that it was immediately withdrawn. One youth, who is known to be a little bit flighty, not quite accountable, poor fellow! declared for Lord Brougham, but we soothed him, and he had sense enough left to see his error almost immediately. At length it came to my turn——"

"And whom did you mention?" inquired Miss Livingstone, with a degree of interest most unusual in her.

"I had been pondering the matter deeply," continued Leicester, "to try and hit on some worthy against whom no valid objection could be raised. At one moment I thought of Moses——"

"I fancied it was restricted to men of modern times," interposed Miss Livingstone.

"He to whom I referred, ma'am," returned Leicester, "was not the Israelitish lawgiver, but the man of the City Mart, that benevolent individual who clothes poverty in 'a light paletot at ten-and-six,' and enables the honest hearts of free-born Britons to palpitate beneath a 'gent's superior vest' for the trifling remuneration of five shillings."

This speech was algebra, or thereabouts, to the lady to whom it was addressed, but she had a sort of instinctive apprehension that Leicester was talking nonsense, and accordingly drew herself up stiffly, completing her resemblance to Minerva by composing her features into a very satisfactory likeness of the Gorgon. No way affected by this transformation, Leicester continued—

"On mature reflection, however, I discarded Moses & Son, and was going to give it up as hopeless, when, all of a sudden, a bright thought

flashed across me, and springing to my feet, I exclaimed in a voice of thunder, 'Gentlemen, I have it; the difficulty is one no longer: the greatest modern benefactor to the human race is—BASS!'

"Who?" exclaimed Miss Livingstone, entirely mystified and a good deal flurried by the narrator's unusual energy.

"Bass," resumed Leicester; "that remarkable man whose gigantic intellect first conceived the project of regenerating society through the medium of PALE ALE! The idea was hailed with enthusiasm; we immediately sent for a dozen; and ere the liquor was disposed of, there was not a man present but would have staked hundreds on the soundness of my opinion."

Utterly disgusted and confused by this unexpected termination to the anecdote, Miss Livingstone rose from her chair, sailed out of the room, and thus the visit concluded.

Lewis, after a solitary walk, during which he was revolving in his mind the step he had just taken, and striving to discern in the dull lead-coloured horizon of his future one ray of light which might yield promise of brighter times to come, was ascending Frere's staircase, when the door of the room above opened suddenly, and a voice, which he thought he recognised, exclaimed—

"Then I may depend upon you; you'll be with me by eight at the latest, and bring your friend, if possible. Ah! here he is! Mr. Arundel, delighted to see you—none the worse for last night, I hope—wasn't it glorious? Grandeville has got such a face on him, he won't be able to show for a week to come; and Meeking of the pallid features is so seedy this morning that I was forced to burthen my conscience by inventing a fictitious fall from his horse, on the strength of which I sent his mamma to nurse him. We must book that to the pious fraud account, and let the charity absolve the lie. Rather shaky divinity, eh, Frere? Well, *au revoir*; I'm off."

So saying, Mr. Tom Bracy—for he it was, and none other—dashed down the stairs, and having deeply scandalised Frere's ancient domestic by an anxious inquiry how it was she did not get a husband, took his departure.

"Frere!" exclaimed Lewis, throwing himself into a chair and coldly repulsing Faust, who never could imagine himself otherwise than welcome, "I've done it!"

"So have I, man," was the reply; "and pretty considerably brown, too, as that nice youth who has just left me would call it. But what have you done to make you so doleful?"

"Sold myself," returned Lewis bitterly.

"Not to the old gentleman, I hope," rejoined Frere, "though your black looks would almost lead one to imagine so."

"What weak, inconsistent fools we are!" pursued Lewis.

"Speak for yourself, young man," observed Frere parenthetically.

"How vacillating and impotent," continued Lewis, not heeding the interruption, "is even the strongest will! I have done this morning the thing I believed I most anxiously desired to do—the thing I came here hoping to accomplish—I have secured a competence for my mother and sister. I have done so on better terms than I had

deemed possible. I have met with consideration, if not kindness, from—from my employer." He pronounced the word firmly, though his temples throbbed and his lip quivered with suppressed emotion as he did so. "All this should make me contented, if not happy. Happy!" he repeated mockingly. "Frere," he continued, with a sudden burst of impetuosity, "it has not done so—I am miserable!"

He rose from his seat and began pacing the room with impatient strides. Faust followed him for one or two turns, wagging his tail and gazing up into his face with loving eyes; but finding his efforts to attract attention unavailing, he uttered a piteous whine, and, retreating to a corner, crouched down, as perfectly aware that his master was unhappy as if he had been a human creature and could have "told his love" in words. Frere would have spoken, but Lewis checked him by a gesture, and continued his rapid walk for some minutes in silence. At length he spoke—

"You think me selfish and ungrateful, and you are right; I am so. I have schooled myself to bear all this, and I *will* bear it; but bitter thoughts arise and at times overpower me. I am very young" ("True for you," muttered Frere, *sotto voce*), "and I am so unfit for such a life as lies before me, a life of tame and ceaseless drudgery, in which to indulge the high aspirations and noble daring that win men honour becomes misplaced folly; to live with people whose equal, if not superior, I feel myself, in a semi-menial capacity; to obey when I would command; to forfeit all that is bright and fair in existence—intercourse with the higher order of minds, the society of pure and refined spirits; and, above all, to lose the only thing I really prize on earth—my independence.

"Well," he continued, after a pause, "the die is cast, and repining is worse than useless. I will give this experiment a fair trial; it may be the harness will set more easily on me than I imagine; and should it become unbearable, I can but cast it off and start afresh: there is such a thing as to COMPEL one's destiny!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LEWIS RECEIVES A LECTURE AND A COLD BATH.

RICHARD FRERE listened to the somewhat grandiloquent remark with which the last chapter concluded, muttering to himself, "'Compel destiny,' indeed; it strikes me you'll find 'destiny,' as you call it, will have the best of it at that game;" then turning to his companion, he observed more gravely, "Now, listen to me, Lewis. What you have just said is no doubt true enough; you *are* about as unfit in tastes and habits for the life that is before you as a man well can be, but for that reason it is exactly the very best thing for you. For what purpose do you suppose we are sent into this world? Most assuredly not only to please ourselves, and by following out our own desires and

caprices, create a sphere for the exercise and increase of our natural faults. No; the only true view of life is as a school, wherein our characters are to be disciplined, and all the changes and chances, sorrows, trials, and temptations we meet with are the agents by which the education of the soul is carried on."

"And a low, wretched view of life it is," replied Lewis bitterly; "a seventy years' pupilage under the rod of destiny. The heathen sage was right who said that those whom the gods love die early. If it were not for Rose and my mother, I would join some regiment bound for India, volunteer into every forlorn hope, and trust that some Sikh bullet would rid me of the burthen of life without my incurring the guilt of suicide."

"In fact, you would die like an idiot, because you lack moral courage to face the evils of life like a man," returned Frere. "But wait a bit: your argument, such as it is, is founded on a fallacy, or on that still more dangerous thing, a half-truth. Granting that life were one scene of bitter experiences,—which would be granting a very large lie,—for what is this discipline intended to fit us? That is the question. You are ambitious—how would you regard obstacles in your path to greatness? You would rejoice in them, would you not, as opportunities for bringing out the high qualities you fancy you possess? fortitude, courage, indomitable perseverance, ready wit, aptitude to lead and govern your fellow-men, and fifty other magnanimous attributes; and deem the greatness unworthy your notice could it be obtained without a struggle. But what is human greatness? A triumph for the hour, bringing its attendant cares and evils with it—mark that,—a bauble, which some other ambitious genius may possibly wrest from your grasp, which old age would unfit you to retain, of which death must deprive you in a few years more or less. Now take the true, the Christian's view of life—obstacles to overcome, demanding *all* our strength of mind, and then proving too mighty for us without the assistance of a Power superior to that of man, but which will be given us if we seek it properly. And the victory won, what is the prize we shall obtain? A position, according to our advance in righteousness, among the spirits of just men *made perfect*; intercourse (with reverence be it spoken) with the Source of all good, Omniscience our teacher, Omnipotence our only ruler, Perfect Justice our lawgiver, Perfect Wisdom our director, the Powers of Heaven for our associates, and our own souls, freed from the trammels of mortality, fitted to appreciate and enjoy these inestimable blessings; and all this, not for time, but for eternity. Lewis, you are a reasonable being, and to your own reason I will leave the question."

There was silence for some minutes. At length Lewis raised his head, revealing features on which the traces of deep emotion were visible, and stretching out his hand to his friend, said in a voice which trembled from excess of feeling, "God bless you, Frere; you are indeed a true friend!" He paused; then added suddenly, "Frere, promise me one thing,—promise me that whatever I may do, whatever rash act or evil deed my feelings may hurry me into, you will not give me up; that while we both live you will act by me as you have done

to-day—that you will preserve me from myself, stand between me and my fiery nature; then shall I feel that I am not utterly deserted—you will be the link that shall still bind me to virtue.”

“Well, if you fancy it will make you any happier, or better, or more reasonable, I will promise it,” returned Frere; “more particularly as I should most probably do it whether I promise it or not.”

“You promise, then?” asked Lewis eagerly.

“I do,” replied Frere.

Lewis once more wrung his friend's hand with such eagerness as to elicit a grimace of pain from that excellent individual, and then continued—

“A conversation of this nature regularly upsets me; I must go out and walk off the excitement before I shall be fit for anything. Come, Faust, good dog! I spoke up for Faust to-day, Frere, and the General accorded a dignified assent: ‘A dog more or less will make little difference in such an establishment as Broadhurst.’”

“Did he say that?” inquired Frere.

“Word for word,” returned Lewis.

“Well, I thought better things of him! ‘Folks is sich fools!’ as my old lady downstairs says. Are you off? Mind you are at home in good time for dinner, for I have been seduced into accepting another evening engagement for us.”

“Any more fighting?” asked Lewis anxiously.

“No; thank goodness for that same!” returned Frere.

“I wish I could meet that long Chartist,” continued Lewis, shaking his fist; “not that I bear him any ill-will, but it would be such a relief to me just now to knock somebody down. Mayn't I set Faust at a policeman?”

“Not unless you prefer Brixton to Broadhurst, and the treadmill to the tutorship,” returned Frere.

“Well, good-bye till dinner-time,” responded Lewis, leaving the room. “I won't punish your carpet any longer. Come, Faust!”

“That is a most singular young man,” soliloquised Frere as he took down and unrolled a Persian manuscript; “very like an excitable steam-engine with an ill-regulated safety-valve in disposition; I only hope he won't blow up bodily while I have the care of him. He is a fine fellow, too, and it's impossible not to be very fond of him; but he's an awful responsibility for a quiet man to have thrust upon him.”

Meanwhile Lewis, walking hurriedly up one street and down another, with the design of allaying the fever of his mind by bodily exercise, found himself at length in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park, and, tempted by the beauty of the afternoon, he continued his stroll till he reached Kensington Gardens. Here, stretching himself on one of the benches, he watched the groups of gaily-dressed loungers and listened to the military band, till he began to fear he might be late for Frere's dinner; and retracing his steps, he proceeded along the bank of the Serpentine towards Hyde Park Corner. As he arrived nearly opposite the receiving-house of the Humane Society, his attention was attracted by the lamentations of a small child, whom all the endearments of a sympathising nursery-maid were powerless to console. The

child, being a fine sturdy boy, and the maid remarkably pretty, Lewis was moved by a sudden impulse of compassion to stop and inquire the cause of the grief he beheld. It was soon explained. Master Tom had come to sail a little boat which his grandpapa had given him; the string by which the length of its voyage was to have been regulated had broken, and the boat had drifted farther and farther from its hapless owner, until at last it had reached a species of buoy, to which the park-keeper's punt was occasionally moored, and there it had chosen to stick hard and fast. In this rebellious little craft was embarked, so to speak, all Master Tom's present stock of earthly happiness; thence the sorrow which Mary's caresses were unable to assuage, and thence the lamentations which had attracted Lewis's attention.

"Don't cry so, my little man, and we'll see if we can't find a way of getting it for you," observed Lewis encouragingly, raising the distressed shipowner in his arms to afford him a better view of his stranded property. "We must ask my dog to go and fetch it for us. Come here, Mr. Faust. You are not afraid of him? he won't hurt you—that's right, pat him; there's a brave boy; now ask him to fetch your boat for you. Say, 'Please, Mr. Faust, go and get me my boat!' say so." And the child, half-pleased, half-frightened, but with implicit faith in the dog's intellectual powers, and the advisability of conciliating its good will and imploring its assistance, repeated the desired formula with great unction.

"That's well! Now, nurse, take care of Master—what did you say?—ay, Master Tom, while I show Faust where the boat is." As he spoke he took up a stone, and attracting Faust's attention to his proceedings, jerked it into the water just beyond the spot where the boat lay, at the same time directing him to fetch it.

With a bound like the spring of a lion the noble dog dashed into the water and swam vigorously towards the object of his quest, reached it, seized it in his powerful jaws, and turned his head towards the bank in preparation for his homeward voyage, while the delighted child laughed and shouted with joy at the prospect of regaining his lost treasure. Instead, however, of proceeding at once towards the shore, the dog remained stationary, beating the water with his fore-paws to keep himself afloat, and occasionally uttering an uneasy whine.

"Here, Faust! Faust! what in the world's the matter with him?" exclaimed Lewis, calling the dog and inciting him by gestures to return, but in vain; his struggles only became more violent, without his making the slightest progress through the water.

Attracted by the sight, a knot of loungers gathered round the spot, and various suggestions were hazarded as to the dog's unaccountable behaviour. "I think he must be seized with cramp," observed a good-natured, round-faced man in a velveteen jacket, who looked like one of the park-keepers. "The animal is suicidally disposed, apparently," remarked a tall, aristocratic-looking young man, with a sinister expression of countenance, to which a pair of thick moustaches imparted a character of fierceness. "Anxious to submit to the cold-water cure,

more probably," remarked his companion. "It will be kill rather than cure with him before long," returned the former speaker with a half laugh; "he's getting lower in the water every minute."

"He is caught by the string of the boat which is twisted round the buoy!" exclaimed Lewis, who during the above conversation had seized the branch of a tree, and raising himself by his hands, had reached a position from which he was able to perceive the cause of his favourite's disaster; "he'll be drowned if he is not unfastened. Who knows where the key of the boat-house is kept?"

"I'll run and fetch it," cried the good-natured man; "it's at the receiving-house, I believe."

"Quick! or it will be of no use!" said Lewis in the greatest excitement.

The man hurried off, but the crowd round the spot had now become so dense—even carriages filled with fashionably-dressed ladies having stopped to learn the catastrophe—that it was no easy matter for him to make his way through it, and several minutes elapsed without witnessing his return. In the meantime the poor dog's struggles were becoming fainter and fainter; his whining had changed to something between a hoarse bark and a howl, a sound so clearly indicative of suffering as to be most distressing to the bystanders; and it was evident that if some effort were not speedily made for his relief he must sink.

"He shall not perish unassisted!" exclaimed Lewis impetuously; "who will lend me a knife?"

Several were immediately offered him, from which he selected one with a broad blade.

"May I inquire how you propose to prevent the impending catastrophe?" asked superciliously the moustached gentleman to whom we have before alluded.

"You shall see directly," returned Lewis, divesting himself of his coat, waistcoat, and neckcloth.

"I presume you are aware there is not one man in a hundred who could swim that distance in his clothes," resumed the speaker in the same sneering tone. "Do you actually—I merely ask as a matter of curiosity—do you really consider it worth while to peril your life for that of a dog?"

"For such a noble dog as that, yes!" replied Lewis sternly. "I might not take the trouble for a *mere puppy*;" and he pronounced the last two words with a marked emphasis, which rendered his meaning unmistakable. The person he addressed coloured with anger and slightly raised his cane, but he read that in Lewis's face which caused him to relinquish his intention, and smiling scornfully he folded his arms and remained to observe the event.

This was Lewis's introduction to Charles Leicester's elder brother, Lord Bellefield, the affianced of Annie Grant.

Having completed his preparations, Lewis placed the knife between his teeth, and motioning to the crowd to stand on one side, gave a short run, dashed through the shallow water, and then, breasting the stream gallantly, swam with powerful strokes towards the still

struggling animal. As he perceived his master approaching, the poor dog ceased howling, and seemingly re-animated by the prospect of assistance, redoubled his efforts to keep himself afloat.

In order to avoid the stroke of his paws, Lewis swam round him, and supporting himself by resting one hand upon the buoy, he grasped the knife with the other, and at one stroke severed the string. The effect was instantly perceptible: freed from the restraint which had till now paralysed his efforts, the dog at once rose higher in the water; and even in that extremity his affection for his master overpowering his instinct of self-preservation, he swam towards him with the child's boat (of which, throughout the whole scene, he had never loosened his hold) in his mouth.

Merely waiting to assure himself that the animal had yet strength enough remaining to enable him to regain the shore, Lewis set him the example by quitting the buoy and striking out lustily for the bank; but now the weight of his clothes, thoroughly saturated as they had become, began to tell upon him, and his strokes grew perceptibly weaker, while his breath came short and thick.

Faust, on the contrary, freed from the string which had entangled him, proceeded merrily, and reached the shore ere Lewis had performed half the distance. Depositing the boat in triumph at the feet of one of the bystanders, the generous animal only stopped to shake the wet from his ears, and then plunging in again swam to meet his master. It was perhaps fortunate that he did so, for Lewis's strength was rapidly deserting him, his clothes appearing to drag him down like leaden weights. Availing himself of the dog's assistance, he placed one arm across its back, and still paddling with the other, he was partly dragged and partly himself swam forward, till his feet touched ground, when, letting the animal go free, he waded through the shallow water and reached the bank, exhausted indeed, but in safety.

Rejecting the many friendly offers of assistance with which he was instantly overwhelmed, he wrang the water from his dripping hair, stamped it out of his boots, and hastily resuming his coat and waist-coat, was about to quit a spot where he was the observed of all observers, when Lord Bellefield, after exchanging a few words with his companion, made a sign to attract Lewis's attention, and having succeeded in so doing, said, "That is a fine dog of yours, sir; will you take a twenty pound note for him?"

Lewis's countenance, pale from exhaustion, flushed with anger at these words; pausing a moment, however, ere he replied, he answered coldly, "Had he been for sale, sir, I should scarcely have risked drowning in order to save him; I value my life at more than twenty pounds." Then turning on his heel, he whistled Faust to follow him, and walked away at a rapid pace in the direction of Hyde Park Corner.

Amongst the carriages that immediately drove off was one containing two ladies who had witnessed the whole proceeding; and as it dashed by him, Lewis, accidentally looking up, caught a glimpse of the bright eager face of Annie Grant!

CHAPTER IX.

WHEREIN RICHARD FRERE AND LEWIS TURN MAHOMETANS.

LEWIS rather expected a lecture from Richard Frere on account of his aquatic exploit; but he need not have made himself uneasy on the subject, for the only remark his friend volunteered was: "Well, you know, if the dog could not be saved without, of course you were obliged to go in and fetch him. I should have done the same myself, though I hate cold water as I hate the old gentleman, and never could swim in my life."

When they had concluded dinner, Frere inquired suddenly: "By the way, do you mean to come with me to-night?"

"Before I can answer that question," returned Lewis, "you must condescend to inform me where you are going, and what you mean to do when you get there."

"To be sure; I thought I had told you; but the fact is, I have been working rather hard lately (I read for three hours after you were gone to bed last night), and my head is not over clear to-day. The case is this, sir: Tom Bracy, who, as I before told you, is lamentably addicted to practical jokes, happens to be acquainted with a certain elderly lady who devotes her life to lion-hunting."

"To *what*?" inquired Lewis.

"To catching celebrities, otherwise termed lions," replied Frere, "and parading them at her parties for the benefit of her friends and acquaintance. On the last occasion of this kind she confided to Bracy her longing desire to obtain an introduction to a certain Persian prince, or thereabouts, who has lately come over to this country to avoid the somewhat troublesome attentions of his family, his younger brother being most anxious to put out his eyes, and his grandfather only waiting a favourable opportunity for bow-stringing him."

"A little more than kin, and less than kind," quoted Lewis.

"I knew you would say that," returned Frere; "in fact, I should have felt quite surprised if you had not. But to proceed with my account. Bracy soon found out that his hostess had never seen the aforesaid Asiatic magnate, and knew next to nothing about him; whereupon he determined 'to get a little fun,' as he calls it, out of the affair, and accordingly informed her, very gravely, that from his acquaintance with the Persian language, he was in the habit of accompanying the prince to evening parties in the character of interpreter, and that if she would entrust him with an invitation, he should be happy to convey it to his Highness, and try to induce him to accept it. She joyfully acceded to the proposal, and this very evening the party is to take place. And now can you guess the purport of Bracy's visit to me?"

"He wants you to act as interpreter in his stead, I suppose; his knowledge of Persian being probably confined to the word 'bosh.'"

"Wrong!" rejoined Frere, laughing. "A higher destiny awaits me. I am for the nonce to be elevated to the proud position of one

of the Blood Royal of Persia. In plain English, Bracy knows as much of the Prince as I do of the Pope; the whole thing is a hoax from beginning to end, and he wants me to personate his Highness, which I have promised to do, while you are to represent an attendant satrap, a sort of Mussulman gold stick-in-waiting, always supposing you have no objection so to employ yourself."

"To tell you the truth, I am scarcely in the vein for such fooling," returned Lewis moodily. "I hate practical jokes to begin with, nor can I see much fun in taking advantage of the absurdities of some weak-minded old lady. At the same time I am tolerably indifferent about the matter, and if you have pledged yourself to go, relying upon my accompanying you, I will put my own tastes out of the question, and do as you wish."

"Equally sententious and amiable," returned Frere; "but the truth is, I have promised Bracy (partly fancying you would like the fun), and go I must."

"I'll accompany you then," rejoined Lewis. "I'd make a greater sacrifice than that for you any day, old fellow. And now may I ask who is the lady to be victimised?"

"An opulent widow, one Lady Lombard, 'the interesting relict of a be-knighted pawnbroker,' as Bracy calls her," replied Frere.

"Who?" inquired Lewis, becoming suddenly interested.

"Why, how now?" returned Frere, astonished at his friend's impetuosity. Then repeating the name, he continued, "Do you know the lady?"

"Yes, I do," rejoined Lewis; "know her for a coarse-minded, purse-proud, wretched old woman!"

"Phew!" whistled Frere. "May I ask how the good lady has been so fortunate as thus to have excited your bitter indignation against her?"

"Never mind," returned Lewis, rising hastily and walking to the window; "it is enough that I know her to be the character I have described."

"That's odd now," muttered Frere, soliloquising. "If I had not been acquainted with his '*antécédens*,' as the French term it, nearly as well as I know my own, I should have fancied the late lamented Lombard had, in bygone hours, refused to negotiate some small loan for him, on the perishable security of personal clothing. He can't have popped the question to the widow at one of the German watering-places, and encountered a negative?"

"Frere, don't mention my dislike of Lady Lombard to your facetious acquaintance," observed Lewis, turning round. "I have no ambition to become a butt for his bad puns."

"Never fear, man, I'll not betray your confidence," returned Frere; "more particularly when, as in the present instance, I don't happen to share it."

"Do you care to know?" asked Lewis.

"Not by no manner of means, as the young lady said, when the parson asked her whether she was prepared to give up all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," returned Frere. "And now, as we

have to be converted into Pagans before ten o'clock, suppose we start."

A quarter of an hour's brisk walking brought them to Bracy's lodgings, where they found that gentleman deeply immersed in study, with the *fez* which was to assist in changing Frere into a prince stuck rakishly on one side of his head. On perceiving his visitors he sprang from his seat, and making a low salaam, in the course of which performance the *fez* tumbled off and knocked down a candle, he exclaimed—

"Most illustrious brothers of the Sun, and first-cousins once removed of the Moon and all the stars, may your shadows never be less! You do me proud by honouring my poor dwelling with your seraphic presences!"

"I see you have got the wherewithal to make Heathens of us," returned Frere, pointing to the couple of Persian dresses which hung against the wall like a brace of Bluebeard's headless wives.

"Bude Light of the Universe, yes!" replied Bracy. "Your slave has procured the '*wear* with all' necessary to complete your transformation from infidel Feringhees to true sons of Islam. Would I have had my prince appear without a *khelaut*—a dress of honour? Be Cheshm! upon my eyes be it;—by the way, it's a remarkable fact that the expression 'my eyes' should be Court lingo in Persia, and bordering upon Billingsgate in English."

"You seem particularly well up in the pseudo-oriental metaphor to-night, Bracy," observed Frere; "has the *fez* inspired you?"

"No, there's nothing miraculous in the affair," returned Bracy; "it is very easily explained. I have been reading up for the occasion—cramming, sir; a process successfully practised upon heavy Johnians at Cambridge and corpulent turkey poults in Norfolk."

"Indeed! I was not aware that you are a Persian scholar. May I inquire what line of study you have adopted?"

"One that I have myself struck out," responded Bracy, "and which has been attended, I flatter myself, with the most successful results. I first subjected myself to a strict course of Hajji Baba, after which I underwent a very searching self-examination in Morier's '*Zohrab, or the Hostage*.' I next thoroughly confused my mind with '*Thalaba*,' but brought myself round again upon '*Bayley Frazer's Travels*'; after which I made myself master of '*Ayesha, or the Maid of Khars*.' And by way of laying in a fitting stock of the sentimental, finished off with Byron's '*Giaour*';—stop, let me give you a specimen." And replacing the unruly *fez*, he sprang upon a chair, and throwing himself into a mock-tragedy attitude, began bombastically to recite—

“ ‘Twas sweet, where cloudless stars were bright,
To view the wave of watery light,
And hear its melody by night;
And oft had Hassan's childhood play'd
Around the verge of that cascade:
And oft upon his mother's breast
That sound had harmonised his rest;

And oft had Hassan's youth along
 Its banks been sooth'd by Beauty's song,
 And softer seem'd each melting tone
 Of music mingled with its own.'

"There now, I call that pretty well for a young beginner; a little of that will go a great way with my Lady Lombard; it is like a penny bun, cheap to begin with, and very filling at the price."

"Turks and Persians are not exactly alike, though you seem to think they are," observed Frere dryly. "Have you laid down any plan of operations, may I ask? You must give me very full and clear directions how to behave, for, to tell you the truth, my acquaintance with the manners and customs of the higher ranks of Persia is infinitesimally select."

"Oh! it's all plain sailing enough," returned Bracy; "you have only to look wise, roll your eyes about, and occasionally jabber a little Persian, or any other unknown tongue you may prefer, which I, not understanding, shall translate *ad libitum* as the occasion may require."

"And sweetly you will do it too, or I am much mistaken," muttered Frere, divesting himself of his greatcoat.

"Pray inform me, as I am unfortunately ignorant of all the oriental languages, how do you propose to supply my deficiencies?" inquired Lewis. "Is my part, like Bottom the weaver's, to be nothing but roaring?"

"Why, as you are about to enact a lion, it would appear not inappropriate," returned Bracy. "Yes, it never struck me; there seems a slight difficulty there—you never got up any *Memoria Technica*, did you?"

Lewis shook his head.

"That's unlucky," continued Bracy; "a page or two of that would have served the purpose beautifully. I met a man the other night who had struck out a new system for himself, and was perfectly rabid about it. He had bottled, according to his own account, the whole history of England into an insinuating little word that sounded to me something like 'Humguffinhoggogrificuana,' and bagged all Hansard's Reports, from Pitt to Peel, in half-a-dozen lines of impossible doggerel. Oh! he was a wonderful fellow—clearly mad, but intensely funny. I kept him in tow two good hours, and made him explain his system twice over to everybody, till the people were ready to cry, he bored them so. I was nearly being punished for it though, as he was actually weak enough to believe in me, and called the next day to fraternise."

"And how did you escape?" asked Lewis.

"Why, I have a sort of tiger (the imp that let you in, in fact), who is a first-rate liar—most excellent, useful boy, I do assure you, sir; I sent him down with a message that I had an attack of Asiatic cholera, but if he would take a glass of wine, and look at the paper till the crisis should be over, I would come to him if it terminated favourably. That settled the business; he did not wait the event, but was off like a shot, thinking the infection might disagree with his 'system,' perhaps."

"Then he has not repeated his visit?" inquired Frere.

"No; and I hope he will not," returned Bracy, "for there will be nothing left for me to have but Elephantiasis or the Plague, and he must be very far gone in innocence if he can swallow either of them."

"Am I expected to put on these things?" asked Frere, holding up a most voluminous pair of Persian trousers, made of a species of silk gauze enriched with glittering spangles.

"Yea, verily, most emphatically and decidedly yes," replied Bracy.

"Well, what must be must be, I suppose," rejoined Frere, with a sigh of resignation; "but I never thought to see myself in such a garment. 'Sure such a pair were never seen!' One thing is clear, I must stand all the evening, for there's no man living could sit down in them."

"Never fear," returned Bracy encouragingly; "only do you go into my bedroom and put on your robes, and I'll ensure your 'taking your seat on your return.' Never make mountains of molehills, man; there are worse dresses than that in the world; for instance, it might have been a kilt."

"That's true," said Frere reflectively, and unhooking the richest Mrs. Bluebeard, he proceeded after sundry ejaculations of disgust to carry it into the other room, whither after a minute or two Bracy followed him, to perform, as he said, the part of lady's-maid. After a lapse of about a quarter of an hour the door was again unclosed, and Bracy, exclaiming, "Now, Mr. Arundel, allow me to have the honour of introducing you to his Sublime Highness Ree Chard el Freer," ushered in the person named.

Never was so complete a transformation seen. The Persian dress, rounding off and concealing the angularities of his figure, gave a sort of dignity to Frere, quite in keeping with the character he was about to assume; while moustaches and a flowing beard imparted a degree of picturesqueness to his countenance which accorded well with his irregular but expressive features and bright animated eyes. A shawl of rich pattern confined his waist, while a girdle, studded with (apparently) precious stones, sustained a sword and dagger, the jewelled hilts and brilliantly ornamented sheaths of which added not a little to the magnificence of his appearance.

"*Voilà!*" exclaimed Bracy, patting him on the back. "What do you think of that by way of a get-up? There's a ready-made prince for you. Asylum of the Universe, how do you find yourself? Do your new garments *sit* easily?"

"None of your nonsense, sir," replied Frere. "If I am a prince, behave to me as *sich*, if you please. I tell you what, I shall be tearing some of this drapery before the evening is over. Ah! well, it is not for life, that is one comfort; but I never was properly thankful before for not having been born a woman. Think of sinking into the vale of years in a muslin skirt—what a prospect for an intellectual being!"

"Now, Mr. Arundel, your dress awaits you," said Bracy, "and 'time is on the wing.' We shall have her ladyship in hysterics if she fancies her prince means to disappoint her,"

Lewis's toilet was soon completed, and proved eminently successful, the flowing robe setting off his tall, graceful figure to the utmost advantage, and the scarlet fez, with its drooping tassel, contrasting well with his dark curls and enhancing the effect of his delicately cut and striking features. Bracy making his appearance at the same moment, most elaborately got up for the occasion, with a blue satin under-waistcoat and what he was pleased to denominate the Order of the Holy Poker suspended by a red ribbon from his button-hole, the tiger of lying celebrity was despatched for a vehicle, and the trio started.

"To a reflective mind," began Bracy, when an interval of wood-pavement allowed conversation to become audible,—“to a reflective mind, there is no section of the zoology of the London streets more interesting than that which treats of the habits and general economy of the genus cabman.”

“As to their general economy,” returned Frere, “as far as I am acquainted with it, it appears to consist in doing you out of more than their fare, and expending the capital thus acquired at a gin-palace.”

“Sir, you misapply terms, treat an important subject with unbecoming levity, and libel an interesting race of men,” returned Bracy, with a countenance of the most immovable gravity.

“Interested, you mean,” rejoined Frere.

“One very striking peculiarity of the species,” continued Bracy, not heeding the interruption, “is their talent for subtle analysis of character, and power of discriminating it by the application of unusual tests.”

“What's coming now?” inquired Frere. “Keep your ears open, Lewis, my son, and acquire wisdom from the lips of the descendant of many Bracys.”

“I am aware an assertion of this nature should not be lightly hazarded,” resumed Bracy, “as it carries little conviction to the ill-regulated minds of the sceptical, unless it be verified by some illustrative example drawn from the actual.”

“You have not got such a thing as a Johnson's Dictionary about you, I suppose?” interrupted Frere. “I want to look out a few of those long words.”

“With this view,” resumed Bracy, “I will relate a little anecdote, which will at the same time prove my position and display the capacity of the London cabman for terse and epigrammatic definition. I had been engaged on committee business at the House of Commons a short time since, and was returning to my lodgings when, as I emerged into Palace Yard, it began to rain. Seeing me without an umbrella, a cabman on the stand hailed me with a view of ascertaining whether I required his services. While I was debating with myself whether the rain was likely to increase or not, I was hailed by the cad of an omnibus just turning into Parliament Street.”

“I never do make puns,” began Frere, “or else I should be inclined to ask whether being exposed to so much *hail* and rain at the same time did not give you cold?”

“It happened that I had just betted a new hat with a man,” continued Bracy, still preserving the most perfect gravity, “as to how

many times the chairman of the committee would take snuff, and had lost my wager; this made me feel awfully stingy, and accordingly availing myself of the lowest of the two estimates, I fraternised with the 'bus fellow, and metaphorically threw over the cabman. As I was ascending the steps of the vehicle I had resolved to patronise, the following remark from the injured Jehu reached my ears; it was addressed to an amphibious individual, '*en sabots et bandeaux de foin*' (as the *Morning Post* would have it), yclept the waterman; and if you don't think it fully bears out my previous assertions, I can only say that you are an incompetent judge of evidence. He first attracted his friend's attention by pointing to me over his shoulder with his thumb, and winking significantly; then added in a tone of intense disgust, 'See that cove; I thort he worn't no good. 'Stead o' takin' a cab to his self, like a gent, he's a goin' to have *threepenn'orth of all sorts.*'"

As Bracy, amid the laughter of his companions, concluded his recital, the vehicle which conveyed them drew up at the door of Lady Lombard's mansion.

CHAPTER X.

CONTAINS A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE PROVERB, "ALL IS NOT GOLD WHICH GLITTERS."

LADY LOMBARD, being in many senses of the word a great lady, lived in a great house, which looked out upon that gloomy sight, a London garden, and had its front door at the back for the sake of appearances. At this perverted entrance did Bracy's mendacious tiger, standing on tip-toe the better to reach the knocker, fulminate like a duodecimo edition of Olympian Jove, until two colossal footmen, in a great state of excitement and scarlet plush, opened the door so suddenly as nearly to cause the prostration of the booted boy, who only saved himself from falling by stumbling, boots and all, against the tall shin of the highest footman, thereby eliciting from that noble creature an ejaculation suggestive of his intense appreciation of the injury done him, and hinting, not obscurely, at his wishes in regard to the future destiny of his juvenile assailant. That youth, however, who, we are forced to confess, was not only as "impudent as he was high," but, reckoning by the peculiar standard which the expression aforesaid indicates, at the very least three feet more so, hastened thus to rebuke his adversary: "Hit's lucky for you, Maypole, as I hain't hon the bench of majorstraits yet, hor ther'd a been five bob hout o' your red plush pockets for swearin', as sure has heggs is heggs! Hif that's hall yer gratitude for me a-bringin' of ye my honourable master and two noble Purshun princes, hi'd better horder the carridge to turn round and take 'em back agen."

Having astonished the disgusted giant by this speech, the imp

bounded down the steps and held open the cab-door with an air of dignified condescension.

"Is not that boy a treasure?" whispered Bracy to Frere as they alighted. "How neatly he took the shine out of that thick-witted pyramid of fool's flesh! I could not have done the thing better myself."

"I don't pretend to any very unusual powers of foresight," muttered Frere under his beard, "but I think I could point out that brat's residuary legatee."

"Ah, indeed!" returned Bracy; "and who do you fix upon? the Archbishop of Canterbury?"

"No, the hangman," was the gruff reply.

"Well, I'd myself venture to insure him against drowning for a very moderate premium," rejoined his master, laughing; "but now I really must beg you to bear in mind that you are utterly ignorant of the English language."

"Inshallah! I'd forgotten my illustrious descent most completely," answered Frere, "but I'll be careful; so, for the next three hours, 'my native' tongue, 'good-night.'"

While this conversation had been carried on in an undertone, the party had been ushered upstairs amidst the wondering gaze of servants innumerable, of all sorts and sizes, from the little foot-page staggering under a galaxy of buttons to the mighty butler barely able to walk beneath the weight of his own dignity.

"What name shall I say, gentlemen?" asked the last-named official in his most insinuating tone; for a Persian prince was a rarity sufficient to impress even his imperturbable spirit with a sense of respect.

"His Highness Prince Mustapha Ali Khan and suite," returned Bracy authoritatively.

Immediately the door of a well-lighted saloon was flung back on its hinges, and in a stentorian voice the major domo announced, "His Highness Prince Mystify-all-I-can and see-it."

"By Jove! he's hit it," whispered Bracy to Lewis, as, following Frere, they entered the room. "He won't beat that if he tries till he's black in the face."

As he finished speaking, the guests, who had crowded as near the door as good breeding would allow to witness the Prince's *entrée*, drew back as a rustling of silks and satins announced the approach of their hostess.

Lady Lombard, who, to judge by appearances, would never again celebrate her forty-fifth birthday, had been a handsome, and still was a fine-looking woman. She was tall and portly; in fact portly is rather a mild term to use in speaking of her ladyship, but we don't like to stigmatise her as stout, and beyond that we could not go in speaking of a lady. She had a very bright colour and a very fair skin, in the display of which she was by no means niggardly, her gown having short sleeves (so short, indeed, as scarcely to be worth mentioning), and being—— well, we know a French word which would express our meaning, but we prefer our own language, and must therefore say,

being rather too much off where it would have been better a little more on. She wore a profusion of light ringlets, which we feel justified in stating, upon our personal responsibility, to have been her own, for Lady Lombard was an honourable woman, and paid her bills most punctually. These flaxen locks rejoiced in one peculiarity—they were not divided in the centre, after the usual method, but the *in medio tutissimus ibis* principle had been abandoned in favour of a new and striking coiffure, which, until we were introduced to her ladyship, we had believed to be restricted to the blue-and-silver epicene pages who worship the prima donna and poke fun at the soubrettes on the opera stage. The page-like parting, then, was on one side of her head, and across her ample forehead lay a festoon of hair, arranged so as to suggest, to a speculative mind, a fanciful resemblance to the drapery at the top of a window curtain. Her features were by no means without expression; on the contrary, meek pomposity and innocent self-satisfaction were written in legible characters on her good-natured countenance.

The most carefully written descriptions usually prove inadequate to convey to the reader's mind a just idea of the object they would fain depict; but as we are especially anxious that others should see Lady Lombard with our eyes, we must beg their attention to the following simple process, by which we trust to enable them to realise her.

Let each reader, then, call to mind the last average specimen of fat and fair babyhood which may have come under his notice; let him imagine it clothed in the richest sky-blue satin; let him deprive it of its coral, and substitute in its place a gold watch and appendages; round its fat little excuse for a neck let him clasp a diamond necklace; let him dress its hair, or provide it a flaxen wig—if its hair should be as yet a pleasure to come—made after the fashion we have above described; and let him, lastly, by a powerful effort of imagination, inflate this baby until, still preserving its infantine proportions, it shall stand five feet nine in its satin shoes,—and he will then have arrived at a very correct idea of Lady Lombard as she appeared when, rustling forward in a tremor of delight, she advanced to perform the part of gracious hostess to the Prince of Persia.

"Really, Mr. Bracy," she began, as that gentleman, with a countenance of solemn satisfaction, stepped forward to meet her, "really, this is *too* kind of you; how *do* you do? So you have positively brought me the *dear* prince? *Will* you introduce me to him, and explain to him how *very* much honoured I am by his condescension in coming this evening?"

Be it observed, by the way, that her ladyship spoke with the greatest *empressement*, and had a habit of uttering many of her words in italics, not to say small capitals.

"It will give me much satisfaction to do so," returned Bracy, with grave courtesy; "but I can assure you the prince came quite of his own accord. The moment I had explained your invitation to him he caught the note out of my hand, pressed it three times to his forehead, and exclaimed in the court dialect of Iraun, '*Hahazur imeyur manzur*, he did, indeed."

"No-o-o, *really!*" ejaculated Lady Lombard, more emphatically than she had ever yet spoken in her life; then, as a faint glimmering came across her that there was a slight anomaly in appearing so deeply interested in a remark which she could by no possibility understand, she added: "But you should recollect, Mr. Bracy, that *every* one does not possess your remarkable acquaintance with the Eastern languages."

"Psha! how forgetful I am!" returned Bracy. "Your ladyship must excuse me; the prince has been so short a time in this country that I am scarcely yet accustomed to my new duties. The few words I had the honour to repeat to you merely signify—you know the Eastern metaphors are very peculiar—'I will kiss'—it's the usual form of accepting any distinguished invitation—'I will kiss her ladyship's door-mat!' Curious, is it not?"

"Yes, *indeed,*" was the sympathetic reply. At the same moment Bracy, turning to Frere, presented him to their hostess, saying "Prince, this is Lady Lombard—*Twygt-hur rhumauld gâl!*"

The first sound that escaped his Highness was a hysterical grunt which, in an Englishman, might have been deemed indicative of suppressed laughter, but proceeding from the bearded lips of a Persian potentate, assumed the character of an Eastern ejaculation. After muttering a few *real* Persian words with an appearance of deep respect, Frere took her ladyship's plump white hand between both his own and raised it to his lips; then, relinquishing it, he spoke again, made a low salaam, and drawing himself up to his full height, crossed his arms on his breast and stood motionless before her. The appealing looks which she cast upon Bracy when the prince spoke was a severe trial to his gravity; but by long experience in practical joking he had acquired wonderful command of countenance, which stood him now in good stead, and he proceeded to translate Frere's sentences into certain flowery and unmeaning compliments, which were about as unlike their real signification as need be.

After Lewis had gone through the same ceremony without the speeches, for which omission Bracy accounted by explaining that it was not etiquette for the Persian nobles to speak when in attendance on their princes, they were led to the upper end of the apartment, where Frere seated himself cross-legged on a sofa and made himself very much at home, keeping Bracy fully employed in inventing translations to speeches, not one word of which he, or any one else present, comprehended. Lewis, in the meantime, who was becoming dreadfully tired of the whole affair, stood near the end of the sofa, with his arms folded across his breast, looking especially scornful and very particularly bored.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Lombard, as a pretty, graceful girl, very simply dressed, made her way up the room, "there's that *dear* Laura Peyton arrived. I *must* go and speak to her, and bring her to be introduced to the Prince." She then added, aside to Bracy, "She's *immensely* rich; clear six thousand a year, and does not spend two."

"A very charming trait in her character," returned Bracy. "I'll mention it to the Prince. I don't know that there ever *was* an

Englishwoman queen of Persia; but that's no reason there never should be one."

Bracy was accordingly introduced to the young lady, and led her, smiling and blushing, up to Frere, by whom he seated her, and paved the way for conversation by the following remark:—

"*Tharmy buoi aintsheaz tunnar?*" which for the damsel's edification he translated—"Asylum of the Universe! the maiden, the daughter of roses, salutes thee!"

After a short interval Lady Lombard again bore down upon them in full sail, towing in her wake a small, hirsute, baboon-like individual, evidently one of her menagerie.

"There's a chimpanzee!" whispered Bracy to Frere. "Now, if that picture of ugliness turns out an eastern traveller we're gone 'coons."

"All right," returned Frere in the same tone, "he's only an exiled something. He came to our shop with a recommendation from some of the Parisian *savans* the other day."

"I must trouble you *once* again, Mr. Bracy," insinuated Lady Lombard. "Professor Malchapeau is *dying* to be introduced."

"No trouble, but a pleasure," returned Bracy. "I shall have the greatest satisfaction in making two such illustrious individuals known to each other. Does the Professor speak English?"

"Yas; I vas spik Angleesh von pritté vell," replied the person alluded to, strutting forward on tiptoe. "I ave zie honaire to vish you how you did, my prince?"

Frere made some reply, which Bracy paraphrased into "The descendant of many Shahs kisses the hem of the mantle of the Father of science."

The Professor's "Angleesh" not providing him with a suitable reply ready made, he was obliged to resort to that refuge for destitute foreigners—a shrug and a grimace.

Lady Lombard came to his assistance.

"Now, Professor, suppose you were to tell his Highness your affecting history;" adding in a whisper, "Mr. Bracy, the interpreter, is connected with government, and might be of the greatest use to you."

"Ohf, miladi, if all zie bodies had your big heart in dem, zies vicked vord should be von eaven," replied the Professor, gratefully, through his talented nose. "My littel storie! ohf, zie Prince should not vant to ear him?"

His Highness, however, being graciously pleased to signify his anxiety so to do, the small man resumed—

"Ah, *ma Patrie!* v hats I ave come thro' for him, ven I vill *raconte* nobody shall not belief."

"To enable the Prince to understand your account more clearly," interrupted Bracy, "may I ask to what country it relates?"

"Vidout von doubt, saire! you shall tell zie Prince dat my littel tale is Swish. My fadaire vas vot you call von mayor of zie canton of Zurich. My brodaire and myselfs vas his only schild; since a long time ve vas live very appy, *mais enfin*—but on his end—zie *sacré Autriche*—von bad Oystrish government, did vot you call oppress *ma pauvre patrie*, and my fadaire, *toujours brave*, got himself into

von littel conspiracy, vaire he did commit vat you call zie offence politique; vas trown to prison, and in his confinement he did die. Ah! '*mourir pour la patrie, c'est doux*,' to die for zie country is zie—vat you call *doux* in Angleesh?"

"You will find the same word in both languages, Professor, only we pronounce it deuce," replied Bracy politely.

"Ah! *c'est bon*, to die for zie country is zie deuce! *Eh bien*, after my poor fadaire was entombed, my brodaire did run himself away, and vas converted to *un berger*, a little shepherd of cows, and I, *hélas!* *pour moi, j'étais désolé*—for myself, I vas dissolute, left alone in zie vide world, visout von friend to turn against. *Mais le ciel embrasse les orphelins*—eaven embarrasses zie orphans; I marched on my foot to Paris; I found an unexpected uncle, who had supposed himself dead for some years; I undervent all zie sciences, and *enfin me voici*—on my end here I am."

"A most affecting history indeed," returned Bracy, covering his mouth with his hand to conceal a smile. As for Frere, he had for some time past been nearly suffocated by suppressed laughter, which at length made itself so apparent that nothing but his beard and an assumed fit of coughing could have saved him from discovery.

While this conversation had been going on, Miss Peyton called Lady Lombard's attention to Lewis by observing: "The interpreter, in entertaining the Prince, seems entirely to have forgotten that very handsome young attendant who stands there, looking so haughty and disconsolate."

"Dear *me!* so he does," exclaimed Lady Lombard anxiously. "How *very* handsome he is! such a thoroughly Eastern countenance! *He's* a man of very high rank, too, over there. What *could* we do to amuse him?"

"Perhaps we might show him some prints," suggested Laura; "at all events the attention might please him."

"Oh, *yes!* how *clever* of you! I should *never* have thought of that now. I've a table covered with them in the boudoir," exclaimed Lady Lombard delightedly; "but *do* you think you could turn them over for him? I'm *so* foolish, I should be quite *nervous*; you see it's so awkward his not understanding English, poor fellow! I know I'm *very* foolish."

"I shall be most happy to do anything I can to lessen your difficulties," replied the young lady good-naturedly. "Shall I look out a book of prints?"

"If you *would* be so kind, my dear, you'll find *plenty* in the boudoir; and I'll go to Mr. Bracy and get him to speak to him for me."

The result of this application was the capture of Lewis, who, inwardly raging, was carried off to the boudoir and seated at a table, while Miss Peyton, half frightened, half amused, turned over a volume of prints for his edification. Lady Lombard and sundry of the guests stood round for some minutes watching the smiles and pantomimic gestures with which Lewis, or rather Hassan Bey, as Bracy had named him, felt bound to acknowledge the young lady's attentions.

Amongst the guests who were thus amusing themselves lounged a

young dandy, who, on the strength of a Mediterranean yacht voyage, set up for a distinguished traveller. To Lady Lombard's inquiry whether he spoke Persian he simpered, "Re'ely—no, not exactly so as to talk to him; but he'll do vastly well. They prefer silence, re'ely, those fellows do. You know I've seen so much of 'em."

"You were in Persia, were you not?" asked one of the company.

"Re'ely—not exactly in his part of Persia. Stamboul, the city of palaces, was my headquarters: but it's much the same; indolence, beards, and tobacco are the characteristics of both races."

"Don't you think he is charmingly handsome?" asked an old young lady, shaking her ringlets after a fashion which five years before had been a very "telling" manœuvre.

"Re'ely, I should scarcely have said so," was the reply; "the boy is well enough for an Asiatic. I like a more—ahem!—manly style of thing." And as he spoke he passed his hand caressingly over a violent pair of red whiskers which garnished his own hard-featured physiognomy.

The cool impudence of this remark inspired Lewis with so intense a sentiment of disgust that his lip curled involuntarily, and he turned over the print before him with a gesture of impatience. On looking up he was rather disconcerted to find Laura Peyton's piercing black eyes watching him curiously.

"You've given us nothing new in the musical way lately, Lady Lombard," observed the "sere and yellow leaf" damsel before alluded to.

"I expect a lady to stay with me soon," was the reply, "whom I *think* you'll be pleased with; she sings and plays in very *first-rate* style."

"Indeed! Is she an amateur or professional, may I inquire?"

"Why, *really*, my dear Miss Sparkless, you've asked a difficult question. The fact is," continued Lady Lombard, sinking her voice, "it's one of those *very* sad cases, reduced fortune—you understand. I mean to have her here *merely* out of charity." Sinking her voice still lower, the following words only became audible: "Wife of a Captain Arundel—foreign extraction originally—quite a *mésalliance*, I believe."

As she spoke some new arrival attracted her attention, and she and her confidante left the boudoir together.

It may easily be conceived with what feelings of burning indignation Lewis had listened to the foregoing remarks; but Frere's lecture of the morning had not been without its fruits. With his anger the necessity for self-control presented itself, and he was congratulating himself at having checked all outward signs of annoyance when he was startled by a silvery voice whispering in his ear: "Persian or no Persian, sir, you understand English as well as I do;" and slightly turning, his eyes encountered those of Laura Peyton fixed on him with a roguish glance. His resolution was instantly taken, and he replied in the same tone: "Having discovered my secret, you must promise to keep it."

"Agreed, on one condition," was the rejoinder.

"And that is——?" asked Lewis.

"That you immediately make a full confession and tell me all about it."

"It is a compact," was the reply.

"That is good," rejoined the young lady. "Now move the portfolio, so that your back will be towards those people. That will do. Hold down your head as if you were examining the prints, and then answer my questions truly and concisely. First, you are an English gentleman?"

"Yes, I hope so."

"Who is the prince?"

"My friend, Richard Frere."

"And why have you both come here dressed like Persians?"

"To mystify our foolish hostess."

"For shame, sir! I'm very fond of Lady Lombard."

"But you know she is a silly woman."

"Well, never mind. Who planned this hoax?"

"Bracy, the so-called interpreter."

"Does Prince Frere talk real Persian?"

"Yes."

"And does the other man understand him?"

"Not a bit."

"Then he invents all the answers? That's rather clever of him. I shall go and listen presently. And you can't talk either Persian or gibberish, so you held your tongue and looked sulky. Well, I think it's all very wrong; but it's rather droll. Poor, dear Lady Lombard! she'd never survive it if she did but know! And now, tell me, lastly, what put you in a rage just this minute and enabled me to find you out?"

"You would not care to know."

"But I do care to know, sir, and you have promised to answer all my questions."

"You heard the speech that woman made about a Mrs. Arundel?"

"Yes, surely."

"Learn, then, that my name is Lewis Arundel, and the lady referred to was my mother. Now do you understand?"

As Lewis uttered these words, in a tone of suppressed bitterness, his companion hastily turned her head and said, in a low, hurried voice—

"I beg your pardon! I fear I have pained you; but I did not know—I could not guess——"

"Pray do not distress yourself," returned Lewis kindly, Rose's smile for a moment smoothing his haughty brow and playing round his proud mouth. "I am sure you would not hurt any one's feelings knowingly; and since you observed my annoyance, I am glad to have been able to explain its cause."

So engrossed had they been by this conversation that they had not observed Miss Sparkless enter the boudoir by another door; and they were first made aware of her presence by seeing her standing, breathless with astonishment, at discovering Miss Peyton in familiar colloquy with a Persian nobleman utterly ignorant of the English language.

"Do you speak German?" asked Lewis quickly.

"Yes, a little," returned Miss Peyton.

"She has not caught a word yet," continued Lewis. "Tell her you found out by accident that I had picked up a few German sentences when the Prince was at the court of Prussia. White lies, unhappily, are inevitable on these occasions," he continued, seeing his companion hesitate. "It's the only way to prevent an *éclaircissement*; and then, think of poor Lady Lombard's feelings!"

"As I seem fairly embarked in the conspiracy, I suppose I must do your bidding," was the reply, and Miss Sparkless, the middle-aged young lady, was accordingly informed of Lewis's German proficiency, whereat, falling into an ecstasy, she replied—

"How charming! What a dear creature he is!" On which the dear creature himself, catching Miss Peyton's eye, was very near laughing outright.

"Laura, my *love*," exclaimed Lady Lombard, entering hastily, "the Prince is going down to supper; will you come?" Then taking her hand caressingly, she added, "Have you been *very* much bored by him, poor fellow?"

"I found he could speak a few words of German, and that helped us on," was the reply.

"Yes, *really*—ah; we might have thought of *that* before," returned Lady Lombard, by no means certain the German language might not form an important and customary branch of Persian education.

During supper Laura Peyton contrived to be seated between Frere and Bracy, the latter of whom she kept so constantly engaged in interpreting for her that he scarcely got anything to eat, and came to the conclusion that in the whole course of his experience he had never before encountered such a talking woman. Nor was his annoyance diminished by observing that Lewis, who was seated opposite, appeared to be deriving the utmost amusement from his discomfiture. Having exhausted every possible pretext for breaking off the conversation, and being each time foiled by the young lady's quiet tact, he was about to resign himself to his fate and relinquish all idea of supper, when a project occurred to him which he immediately hastened to put into execution. Waiting till Frere had spoken a Persian sentence, he suddenly drew himself up, looking deeply scandalised, frowned at the speaker, shook his head and muttered something unintelligible in a tone of grave remonstrance, then paused for a reply, which Frere, intensely perplexed, and by no means clear that he had not done something un-Persian and wrong, was forced to utter. This only seemed to make matters worse: Bracy again remonstrated in gibberish, then appeared to have determined on his course, and muttering, "Well, there's no help for it, I suppose," he turned to Lady Lombard, and began in a tone of deep concern—

"I have a most disagreeable duty to perform, and must beg you to believe that nothing but absolute necessity could have induced me to mention the matter; but I have remonstrated with his Highness without effect, and I dare go no further—he is subject to most violent bursts of passion, and becomes dangerous when opposed. He drew

his dagger and attempted to stab me only yesterday, because I interfered to prevent his having one of the waiters of the hotel strangled with a bow-string."

Lady Lombard turned pale on receiving this information, while Bracy continued—

"It is most unfortunate, but the Prince has been so much delighted with this young lady's charming flow of conversation that, in his ignorance of the customs of this country, he has actually commissioned me to offer you £500 for her, and declared his determination of taking her home with him."

The effect of this communication may be "better imagined than described." Miss Peyton, aware of the true state of affairs, hid her face in her handkerchief in an uncontrollable fit of laughter; Lewis, sorely tempted to follow her example, bent over his plate till the flowing tassel of the fez concealed his features; Frere, excessively annoyed at the false imputation, all but began a flat denial of the charge in somewhat forcible English, but remembering his assumed character just in time, clenched his fist and ground his teeth with impatience, while Lady Lombard, observing these gestures, and construing them into indications of an approaching burst of fury, was nearly swooning with terror, when a note was put into her hands by a servant; hastily casting her eyes over it, she handed it to Bracy, saying—

"This is most fortunate; it may serve to divert his attention."

As he became aware of its contents his countenance fell, and holding it so that Frere might read it, he whispered—

"Here's a treat! We *are* in for it now, and no mistake!"

The note ran as follows:—

"Dr. —, Persian Professor at Addiscombe, presents his compliments to Lady Lombard, and begs to inform her that being only in town for a few hours, and learning accidentally that his Highness Prince Mustapha Ali was spending the evening at her house, he has ventured to request her permission to intrude upon her uninvited, as he is most anxious to renew his acquaintance with his Highness, whom he had the honour to know in Persia."

CHAPTER XI.

TOM BRACY MEETS HIS MATCH.

THE position in which we left Lewis and his friends at the conclusion of the preceding chapter was decidedly more peculiar than agreeable, and afforded no bad illustration of the American expression, "a pretty tall fix." Bracy, the fertile in expedients, was the first to hazard a suggestion, which he did by whispering to Frere, "You had better be taken suddenly ill; I shall say you have had too much tongue (if you have not, I have), and that it has disagreed with you."

"Wait a bit," returned Frere; "you have seen the real Prince, haven't you?"

Bracy nodded in assent, and Frere continued, "He's something like me, is he not?"

"Better looking," was the uncomplimentary rejoinder.

"Well, never mind that," resumed Frere. "I don't set up for a beauty, but if I am sufficiently like to pass for him I might contrive to humbug the fellow for a few minutes, and then we could manage to slip away quietly without any shindy at all."

"You can try it on if you choose, but he is safe to find you out, unless he is a perfect fool, and that is too great a mercy to hope for," returned Bracy dejectedly. "If the worst comes to the worst, pretend to pick a quarrel with him, draw your carving-knife and make a poke at him; then Arundel and I will bundle him out of the room bodily, and swear we are doing it to save his life. I can see nothing else for it, for there go the women, and, by Jove, here's the learned Pundit himself! Oh! isn't he pretty to look at? Why, he is a fac-simile of the picture in the old editions of Gay's Fables, of 'the Monkey who had seen the World.'"

While this dialogue was proceeding, Lady Lombard, having gathered the ladies under her wing, had marched them off to the drawing-room, Miss Peyton finding an opportunity as she passed Lewis to say, in German, "Tell your Prince that when I sell myself I shall want a great deal more than £500."

"In fact, that your value is quite inestimable," returned Lewis.

"Exactly so," was the reply. "I am glad you have sufficient penetration to have found it out already."

The description given by Bracy of the Doctor's outward man was by no means inapt. His hair and whiskers were grey, and, still adhering to the fashions of his younger days, he wore powder and a pig-tail. His dress consisted of a black single-breasted coat with a stand-up collar, knee breeches, and silk stockings; a profusion of shirt frill rushed impetuously out of the front of his waistcoat, a stiff white neckcloth appeared thoroughly to deserve the appellation of "choker" which Bracy applied to it, while a shirt-collar starched to a pitch of savage harshness invaded the region of his cheeks to an extent which rendered the tract of country lying between the ears and the corners of the mouth a complete *terra incognita*. Constant study of the Eastern hieroglyphics had probably rendered his wearing spectacles a matter of necessity; at all events a huge pair in a broad tortoiseshell setting garnished his nose, which, truth compels us to confess, was more than slightly red, in which particular it afforded a decided contrast to his general complexion, which was, we say it distinctly and without compromise, yellow.

To this gentleman, who entered with a hasty step and glanced round him with a quick, abrupt, and rather startling manner, did Bracy address himself with much *empressement*.

"My dear sir, this is most fortunate; the Prince is quite delighted at the rencontre, but you must expect to find his Highness greatly altered. The cares of life, my dear sir, the anxieties attending—ah!

I see you are impatient; I won't detain you, but I wished to warn you that if you should perceive any great change in his appearance, you must not be surprised, and above all be careful not to show it by your manner. You have no idea how sensitive he is on the point; quite morbidly so, really. Don't let me detain you—how well you are looking!”

A good deal of pantomimic action had accompanied the delivery of this speech, the Doctor being engaged in making vain and futile attempts to get past his persecutor, who on his part continued, with an affectation of the deepest respect, constantly, and with the utmost perseverance, to frustrate them. The concluding words of his address, however, elicited the following rejoinder, spoken in a quick, cross inanner :—

“You have the advantage of me, sir, for I do not remember ever setting eyes on you before in my life. I never forget a face I have once seen.”

“Confound his memory!” thought Bracy, “Frere won't have a chance with him;” he only said, however, “You are right, Doctor; the fact of your looking well is so self-evident that I ventured to remark it, without having any previous data to go upon—but here is his Highness,” and as he spoke, he at length moved on one side and allowed the man of learning to pass.

Frere coming forward at the same minute, Bracy whispered, while the Doctor bent in a low salaam :

“I have bothered his brains sweetly for him, he hardly knows whether he's standing on his head or his heels; so now you must take care of yourself, and joy go with you.”

Frere, thus apostrophised, returned the Doctor's salute with much cordiality, and Bracy, feigning some excuse, left them to entertain each other, having before his eyes a wholesome dread of the newcomer's addressing him in Persian, and thereby discovering his deplorable ignorance of that interesting language.

Time, which does not stand still for princes any more than for private individuals, passed on with its usual rapidity. Most of the gentlemen having eaten as much, and drunk probably more (looking at it in a medical point of view) than was good for them, had rejoined the ladies, and it became evident to Bracy that a crisis in his evening's amusement was approaching. On his return to the drawing-room he must of course resume his duties as interpreter, and this inconvenient Persian professor would inevitably discover the imposture. This was the more provoking, as Frere's likeness to the Prince must evidently have been much stronger than he had imagined, and his acquaintance with the rules of Persian etiquette more extensive than he had believed possible, for the Doctor continued to converse with the utmost gravity, and appeared to believe in him implicitly. While he was still pondering the matter in his anxious mind, the few last remaining guests conveyed themselves away, and the Prince and his party were left to dispute possession of the supper-room with empty champagne bottles and half-tipsy waiters. Frere, when he perceived this to be the case, beckoned Bracy to approach, and as soon as he was within earshot, whispered—

"I have humbugged the old fellow beautifully on the score of our Persian recollections, but he has just been questioning me about you,—where you acquired your knowledge of the language, whether you have been much in the East, how I became acquainted with you, and all the rest of it. I put him off with lies as long as I could, but it would not do, and as a last resource, I have been obliged to refer him to you."

"The deuce you have!" was the reply; "that is pleasant. He'll be jabbering his confounded lingo, and I shall not understand a word he says to me; besides, my jargon won't go down with him, you know. I tell you what, I shall be off, and you must say upstairs (he can interpret for you) that I have been sent for by the prime minister at a minute's notice, *à la* De Grandeville."

"'Tis too late," replied Frere; and at the same instant the Doctor seized Bracy by the button, and in a stern and impressive manner asked some apparently searching question in Persian. Few men had enjoyed the delight of seeing Tom Bracy in the unenviable frame of mind expressed by the nautical term "taken aback," but of that favoured few were the bystanders on the present occasion. Never was an unhappy individual more thoroughly and completely at a loss; and it must be confessed the situation was an embarrassing one. To be addressed by an elderly stranger in an unintelligible language, in which you are expected to reply, while at the same time you are painfully conscious that your incapacity to do so, or even (not understanding the question) to give an appropriate answer in your native tongue, will lead to a discovery you are most anxious to avert, is an undeniably awkward position in which to be placed. That Bracy found it so was most evident, for he fidgeted, stammered, glanced appealingly towards Frere for aid, and at last was obliged, between annoyance and an intense appreciation of the absurdity of his situation, to get up a fictitious cough, which, irritating the membrane of the nose, produced a most violent genuine sneeze. From the effects of this convulsion of nature he was relieved by a hearty slap on the back, while at the same moment the tones of a familiar voice exclaimed in his ear—

"Sold, by all that's glorious! Bracy, my boy, how do you find yourself?" and on looking up he recognised in the laughing face of the Addiscombe doctor, now divested of its spectacles, the well-known features of Charley Leicester.

CHAPTER XII.

LEWIS FORFEITS THE RESPECT OF ALL POOR-LAW GUARDIANS.

EQUALLY surprised and mystified at the complete manner in which the tables had been turned upon him, Bracy stood listening with a disgusted expression of countenance to the peals of laughter which his discomfiture elicited from his companions.

"Yes, laugh away," growled the victimised practical joker; "it's all very funny, I dare say, but one thing I'll swear in any court of justice, which is, that you have been talking real Persian, at least if what Frere jabbers is real Persian."

"Of course I have," returned Leicester, still in convulsions. "When Frere and I planned this dodge we knew what a wide-awake gentleman we had to deal with, and took our measures accordingly. I learned four Persian sentences by heart from his dictation, and pretty good use I have made of them too, I think."

"It was not a bad idea, really," observed Bracy, who, having got over his annoyance at the first sense of defeat, instantly recovered his good-humour. "How well you are got up! I did not recognise you one bit till you pulled off the barnacles."

"Yes, I got little Stevens, who does the light comic business at one of the minors, to provide the apparel and come and dress me. I hope you admire my complexion; he laid on the red and yellow most unsparingly."

"He has done it vastly well," returned Bracy. "I shall cultivate that small man; he may be extremely useful to me on an occasion."

"Now we ought to be going upstairs," interrupted Frere; "these waiter fellows are beginning to stare at us suspiciously too. I say, Bracy, cut it short, man; we have had all the fun now, and I'm getting tired of the thing."

"Ya, Meinheer," rejoined Bracy aloud, adding in a lower tone, "The slaveys will swallow that or anything else for Persian. They are all more or less drunk, by the fishy expression of their optics."

Laura Peyton was astonished somewhat later in the evening by the Addiscombe professor leaning over the back of the sofa on which she was seated and asking whether she had enjoyed her last valse at Almack's the evening before last.

"Surely you can feel no particular interest about such a frivolous and unintellectual matter, sir," was the reply.

"I was about to follow up the inquiry by asking whether your partner made himself agreeable."

"To which I shall reply, after the Irish fashion, by asking how it can possibly concern you to know, sir?"

"Merely because I have the honour of the gentleman's acquaintance."

"That, in fact, you are one of those uncommon characters who know themselves," returned Laura with an arch smile. "Is not that what you wish to impress upon me, Mr. Leicester?"

Charley laughed, then continued in a lower tone, "I saw you knew me. Did your own acuteness lead to the discovery, or are there traitors among us?"

"Your friend Mr. Arundel's expressive features let me into the secret of his acquaintance with the English language before we went down to supper; but I entered into a contract not to betray the plot if he would tell me all I might wish to know about it, so the moment he came up I made him inform me who you were. What a gentlemanly, agreeable person he is!"

As she said this a slight shade passed across Leicester's good-natured countenance, and he replied, more quickly than was his wont—

"I had fancied Miss Peyton superior to the common feminine weakness of being caught by the last handsome face."

"What a thoroughly *man-like* speech!" returned the young lady. "Did I say anything about his appearance, sir? Do you suppose we poor women are so utterly silly that we can appreciate nothing but a handsome face? Your professor's disguise has imbued you with the Turkish belief that women have no souls."

"No one fortunate enough to be acquainted with Miss Peyton would continue long in such a heresy," replied Leicester, with the air of a man who thinks he is saying a good thing.

"Yes, I knew you would make some such reply," returned Laura. "You first show your real opinion of women by libelling the whole sex, and then try to get out of the scrape by insulting my understanding with a personal compliment. Wait," she continued, seeing he was about to defend himself, "you must not talk to me any more now, or you will excite Lady Lombard's suspicions and betray the whole conspiracy. Go away, and send my new friend Mr. Arundel Hassan Bey here; Lady Lombard committed him to my charge, and I want to cultivate him."

Leicester tried to assume a languishing look, which he was in the habit of practising upon young ladies with great success, but becoming suddenly conscious of the wig and spectacles, and gathering from Laura's silvery laugh that such adjuncts to an interesting expression of countenance were incongruous, not to say absurd, he joined in her merriment, then added, "You are in a very wicked mood to-night, Miss Peyton; but I suppose I must e'en do as you bid me, and reserve my revenge till some more fitting opportunity;" then, mixing with the crowd, he sought out Lewis and delivered the young lady's message to him, adding in his usual drawling tone, "You have made a what-do-ye-call-it—an impression in that quarter. Women always run after the last new face."

"You are right," returned Lewis, with a degree of energy which startled his listless companion; "and those men are wisest who know them for the toys they are, and avoid them."

Leicester gazed after his retreating figure in astonishment, then murmured to himself, "What's in the wind now, I wonder; is the good youth trying to keep up the Asiatic character, or suddenly turned woman-hater? Confound that little Peyton girl, how sharp she was to-night!"

"How very well Mr. Leicester is disguised!" observed Laura Peyton to Lewis, after they had conversed in German for some minutes on general topics.

"Yes," replied Lewis; "though I can't say his appearance is improved by the alteration."

"A fact of which he is fully aware," returned Laura, smiling.

A pause ensued, which was terminated by Laura's asking abruptly, "Do gentlemen like Mr. Leicester?"

"Really I have not sufficient knowledge of facts to inform you, but I should say he is a very popular man."

"Popular man! I hate that phrase," returned his companion pettishly. "It is almost as bad as describing any one as a man about town, which always gives me the idea of a creature that wears a pea-jacket, lives at a club, boards on cigars, talks slang, carries a betting-book, and never has its hair cut. Can't you tell me what you think of Mr. Leicester yourself?"

"Well, I think him gentlemanly, good-natured, agreeable up to a certain point, cleverish——"

"Yes, that will do; I quite understand. I don't think you do him justice—he has a kind heart, and more good sense than you are disposed to give him credit for. You should not form such hasty judgments of people; a want of charity I perceive is one of your faults. And now I must wish you good-night; I hear my kind old chaperone anxiously bleating after me in the distance."

So saying she arose and hastened to put herself under the protection of "a fine old English gentlewoman," who, with a hooked nose, red gown, and green scarf, looked like some new and fearful variety of the genus Parroquet. At the same time, Bracy summoned Lewis to join the Prince, who was about to depart, which, after Lady Lombard had in an enthusiasm of gratitude uttered a whole sentence in the largest capitals, he was allowed to do.

Leicester accompanied them, tearing himself away from Professor Malchapeau, who had singled him out as a brother *savan*, and commenced *raconte*-ing to him his affecting history, thereby leaving that shaggy little child of misfortune to lament to his sympathising hostess the melancholy fact that "Zie Professor Addiscombe had cut his little tale off short, and transported himself away in von great despatch."

'Twere long to tell the jokes that were made, the new and additional matter brought to light, as each of the quartette, assembled round a second edition of supper in Bracy's rooms, detailed in turn his own personal experiences of the evening's comicalities—the cigars that were smoked, or the amount of sherry cobbler that was imbibed: suffice it to say, that a certain lyrical declaration that they would not "go home till morning," to which, during their symposium, they had committed themselves, was verified when, on issuing out into the street, the cold grey light of early dawn threw its pale hue over their tired faces and struggled with sickly-looking gas lamps for the honour of illuminating the thoroughfares of the sleeping city.

Leicester's cab, with his night-horse—a useful animal, which, without a leg to stand upon, possessed the speed of the wind, and having every defect horseflesh is heir to, enjoyed a constitution which throve on exposure and want of sleep, as other organisations usually do on the exact opposites—was in waiting. Into this vehicle Charley (who bore some token of sherry cobbler in the unsteadiness of his gait), having made two bad shots at the step, rushed headlong and drove off at an insane pace, and in a succession of zigzags.

Frere and Lewis watched the cab till, having slightly assaulted an



THREE STEPS IN LIFE—BEGGARY, POVERTY, AND COMPETENCE.

unoffending lamp-post, it flew round a corner and disappeared; then, having exchanged a significant glance suggestive of sympathetic anticipations of a sombre character in regard to the safety of their friend, they started at a brisk pace, which soon brought them to Frere's respectable dwelling. While the proprietor was searching in every pocket but the right one for that terror of all feeble-minded elders, that pet abomination of all fathers of families, that latest invention of the enemy of mankind—a latch-key—they were accosted by a lad of about fifteen, whose ragged clothes, bronzed features, and Murillo-like appearance accorded well with his supplication, "*Per pietà, Signor, denaro per un povero Italiano.*"

Frere looked at him attentively, then exclaimed, "I tell you what, boy, it won't do; you're no more an Italian than I am. You should not try to impose upon people."

The boy hung down his head, and then replied doggedly, "It's your own fault; you'll let an English boy starve in the streets before you'll give him a bit of bread, but you are charitable enough to them foreign blackguards."

"That's not true," replied Frere. "However, liar or not, you must be fed, I suppose; so if you choose to take a soup-ticket, here's one for you."

"No," returned the boy proudly, "you have called me liar, and I won't accept your miserable bounty. I'd sooner starve first."

"As you please," returned Frere, coolly pocketing the rejected ticket. "Now have the goodness to take yourself off. Come, Lewis."

"I'll join you immediately," replied Lewis.

"Mind you shut the door after you, then," continued Frere, "or we shall have that nice lad walking off with the silver spoons." So saying, he entered the house.

Lewis waited till his retreating footsteps were no longer audible, then fixing his piercing glance upon the boy, he said in an impressive voice, "Answer me truly, and I will give you assistance. Where did you learn to speak Italian with so good an accent?"

"In Naples, sir!"

"How did you get there?"

"I served on board a man-of-war."

"And how have you fallen into this state of beggary?"

The boy hesitated for a moment, but something led him instinctively to feel that his confidence would not be abused, and he answered: "When we got back to England and the crew were paid off I received £15. I got into bad company; they tempted me to everything that was wrong. My money was soon gone; I had no friends in London, and I wouldn't have applied to them after going on so bad if I'd had any. I sold my clothes to buy bread; and when I had nothing left I begged, and lately I've passed myself off as an Italian boy, because I found people more willing to give to me."

"And do you like your present life?"

"No, I have to bear cold and hunger; and when people speak to me as *he* did just now it makes me feel wicked. Some day it will drive me mad, and I shall go and murder somebody."

"What do you wish to do, then?"

"If I could buy some decent clothes, I'd walk down to Portsmouth and try and get afloat again."

"And what would it cost to provide them?"

"I could rig myself out for a pound."

Lewis paused for a moment, then added quickly: "Boy, I am poor and proud, as you are, therefore I can feel for you. Had I been exposed to temptation, friendless and untaught, I might have fallen as you have done. You have learnt a bitter lesson and may profit by it; it is in my power to afford you a chance of doing so."

He drew a card from his pocket and wrote upon it a few words in pencil, then handing it to the boy, continued: "There is the direction to a friend of mine, the captain of a ship about to sail in a few days; show him my card, and tell him what you have told me. There is a sovereign to provide your dress, and five shillings to save you from begging or stealing till you get to Portsmouth; and when next you are tempted to sin remember its bitter fruits."

As he spoke he gave him the money. The boy received it mechanically, fixed his bright eyes for a moment on the face of his benefactor, and then, utterly overcome by such unexpected kindness, burst into a flood of tears. As Lewis turned to depart the first rays of the rising sun fell upon the tall, graceful figure of the young man and the tattered garments and emaciated form of the boy.

Far different was the scene when Lewis Arundel and the creature he was thus rescuing from infamy met again upon the RAILROAD OF LIFE!

CHAPTER XIII.

IS CHIEFLY HORTICULTURAL, SHOWING THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY TRAINING UPON A SWEET AND DELICATE ROSE.

ROSE ARUNDEL sat at the open window of her little bedroom and gazed out into the night. The scent of many flowers hung upon the loaded air, and the calm stars looked down from Heaven, contrasting their impassive grandeur with the unrest of this weary world. The evening had been lovely; not a breath of wind was stirring; the long shadows that slept upon the green sward, and afforded a dark background on which the brilliant glow-worms shone like diamonds on a funeral pall, were motionless; the silence, unbroken save when some heavy beetle or other strange insect of the night winged its drowsy way across the casement, was almost oppressive in its depth of stillness; it was a time and place for grave and earnest thought, a scene in which the full heart is conscious of its own sorrow. And Rose, although she had too much good sense and right principle to allow herself to feel miserable, was far from happy. The key to the inner

life of every true-hearted woman must be sought in the affections. The only two people whom Rose had loved, as she was capable of loving, were her father and brother; for Mrs. Arundel, though all her impulses were kind and amiable, did not possess sufficient depth of character to inspire any very strong attachment. Between Captain Arundel and his daughter had existed one of those rare affections which appear so nearly to satisfy the cravings of our spiritual nature, that lest this world should become too dear to us they are blessings we are seldom permitted long to enjoy. Rose and her father were by nature much alike in disposition, and in forming her character, and educating and developing her mind, he had for some years found his chief interest, while in her affection lay his only solace for the blighted hopes and ruined prospects of a lifetime.

Originally highly connected, Captain Arundel had incurred the displeasure of his family by forming in the heat of youthful passion, and under peculiar circumstances, a marriage with the daughter of an English resident at Marseilles by a foreign mother. Too proud to seek to conciliate his relations, Mr. Arundel became a voluntary exile, entered into the Austrian army, where he speedily rose to the rank of captain and served with much distinction, till failing health induced him to resign his commission and return to England for the sake of educating his children. His heart was set on one object—namely, to bestow upon his son the education of an English gentleman, and for this purpose he had availed himself of a very unusual talent for painting as a means by which he might increase his slender income sufficiently to meet the expenses of sending Lewis to Westminster and afterwards to a German university. The constant application thus rendered inevitable fostered the seeds of that most insidious of all ailments, a heart-disease, and while still forming plans for the welfare of his family, an unwonted agitation induced a paroxysm of his complaint, and ere Rose could realise the misfortune that threatened her she was fatherless.

Although stunned at first by the unexpected shock, hers was not a mind to give way at such a moment, and to those who judge by the outward expression only Mrs. Arundel's grief appeared much more intense than that of her daughter. But Rose's sorrow was not a mere transitory feeling, which a few weeks more or less might serve to dissipate; it had become part of her very nature, a thing too sacred to be lightly brought to view, but enshrined in the sanctuary of her pure heart it remained a cherished yet solemn recollection, which would shed its hallowing influence over the future of her young life. And now, as she sat with her calm, earnest eyes upturned to the tranquil heaven above her, her thoughts wandered back to him she had so dearly loved, and she pondered the solemn questions which have ere now presented themselves to many a mourning spirit, and longed to penetrate the secrets of the grave and learn things which death alone can teach us. Then she recalled conversations she had held with him that was gone on these very subjects, and remembered how he had said that the things which God had not seen fit to reveal, could neither be needful nor expedient for us to know; that such

speculations were in themselves dangerous, inasmuch as they tended to lead us to form theories which, having no warrant in Scripture, might be at variance with truth; and that it was better to wait patiently in humble faith—that a time would come when we should no longer see through a glass darkly, and the hidden things of God should be made known unto us. Then her thoughts, still pursuing the same train, led her to reflect how all her father's aspirations, crushed and disappointed in the wreck of his own fortunes, had centred in his son, and the bitter tears which no personal privations or misfortunes could have forced from her, flowed down her cheeks as she reflected how these bright anticipations seemed doomed never to be realised.

Unselfish by nature, and trained to habits of thoughtfulness by witnessing her father's life of daily self-sacrifice, Rose had never been accustomed to indulge on her own account in those day-dreams so common to the sanguine mind of youth. But the germs of that pride and ambition which were Lewis's besetting sins existed in a minor degree in Rose's disposition also, and found vent in a visionary career of greatness she had marked out for her brother, and for which his unusual mental powers and striking appearance seemed eminently to qualify him. In nourishing these visions her father had unconsciously assisted, when in moments of confidence he had imparted to her his hopes that Lewis would distinguish himself in whatever career of life he might select, and by his success restore them all to that position in society which by his own imprudence he had forfeited. What a bitter contrast did the reality now present! Rose had received that morning a letter from her brother detailing his interview with General Grant and its results; and though, from a wish to spare her feelings, he had been more guarded in his expressions than on the occasion of his conversation with Frere the preceding day, yet he did not attempt to disguise from her his repugnance to the arrangement, or the degradation to which his haughty spirit led him to consider he was submitting.

"Poor Lewis!" murmured Rose, "I know so well what misery it will be to him; the slights, the hourly petty annoyances which his proud, sensitive nature will feel so keenly; and then, to waste his high talents, his energy of character and strength of will on the drudgery of teaching, when they were certain to have led him to distinction if he had only had a fair field for their exercise—it would have broken dearest papa's heart, when he had hoped so differently for him. But if *he* had lived this never would have been so. He often told me he had influential friends, and though he never would apply to them on his own account, he declared he would do so when Lewis should become old enough to enter into life. I wonder who they were. He never liked to talk on those subjects, and I was afraid of paining him by inquiring. I am glad there is a Miss Grant: I hope she may prove a nice girl—and will like Lewis; but of course she will—every one must do that. Oh! how I hope they will treat him kindly and generously—it will all depend upon that. Poor fellow! with his impulsive disposition and quick sense of wrong—his fiery temper too, how will he get on? And it is for our sakes he does all this,

sacrificing his freedom and his hopes of winning himself a name. How good and noble it is of him !”

She paused, and leaning her brow upon her little white hand, sat buried in deep thought. At length she spoke again.

“If I could do anything to earn money and help I should be so much happier. Poor papa got a good deal lately for his pictures ; but they were so clever. Lewis can paint beautifully, but my drawings are so tame. I wonder whether people would buy poetry. I wish I knew whether my verses are good enough to induce any one to purchase them. Dearest papa praised those lines of mine which he accidentally found one day. Of course he was a good judge, only perhaps he liked them because they were mine.” And the tears rolled silently down her pale cheeks as memory brought before her the glance of bright and surprised approval, the warm yet judicious praise, the tender criticism—words, looks, and tones of love now lost to her for ever, which the accidental discovery of her verses had drawn forth. With an aching heart she closed the casement, and lighting a candle, proceeded to unlock a small writing-desk, from whence she drew some manuscript verses, which ran as follows :—

THE PREACHER'S ADDRESS TO THE SOUL.

WEARY soul,
 Why dost thou still disquiet
 Thyself with senseless riot,
 Taking thy fill and measure
 Of earthly pleasure ?
 The things which thou dost prize
 Are not realities ;
 All is but seeming.
 Waking, thou still liest dreaming.
 That which before thine eye
 Now passeth, or hath past,
 Is nought but vanity—
 It cannot last.
 This evil world, be sure,
 Shall not endure.
 Art thou a-weary, Soul, and dost thou cry
 For rest ? Wait, and thou soon shalt have
 That thou dost crave,
 For DEATH *is real*—the GRAVE *no mockery*.

THE SOUL'S REPLY.

PREACHER, too dark thy mood ;
 God made this earth—
 At its primeval birth
 “ God saw that it was good.”
 And if through Adam's sin
 Death enter'd in,

Hath not Christ died to save
Me from the grave?
 Repented sins for His sake are forgiven—
 There *is* a heaven.
 For that this earth is no abiding-place,
 Shall we displace
 The flowers that God hath scatter'd on our path—
 The kindly hearth;
 The smile of love still brightening as we come,
 Making the desert, home;
 The seventh day of rest, the poor man's treasure
 Of holy leisure;
 Bright sunshine, happy birds, the joy of flowers?
 Ah, no! this earth of ours
 Was "very good," and hath its blessings still;
 And if we will,
 We may be happy. Say, stern preacher, why
 Should we then hate to live, or fear to die,
 With Love for Time, Heaven for Eternity?

Rose perused them attentively, sighed deeply, and then resumed—

"Yes, *he* liked them, and said (I remember his very words) there was more vigour and purpose about them than in the general run of girlish verses. How could I find out whether they are worth anything?" She paused in reflection, then clasping her hands together suddenly, she exclaimed—

"Yes, of course, Mr. Frere; he was so good and kind about the pictures, and Lewis says he is so very clever, he will tell me. But may not he think it strange and odd in me to write to him? Had I better consult mamma?"

But with the question came an instinctive consciousness that she was about the last person whom it would be agreeable to consult on such an occasion. Rose, like every other woman possessing the slightest approach to the artist mind, felt a shrinking delicacy in regard to what the Browning school would term her "utterances," which rendered the idea of showing them where they would not be appreciated exquisitely painful to her. Now, Mrs. Arundel had a disagreeable knack of occasionally brushing against a feeling so rudely as to cause the unlucky originator thereof to experience a mental twinge closely akin to the bodily sensation yclept toothache.

It will therefore be no matter of surprise to the reader to learn that Rose, after mature deliberation, resolved to keep the fact of her having applied to Mr. Frere a secret, at all events till such time as the result should become known to her.

She accordingly selected such of her poetical effusions as she deemed most worthy, in the course of which process she stumbled upon a short prose sketch, the only thing of the sort she had ever attempted, it being, in fact, a lively account of her first appearance at a dinner-party, written for the benefit of a young lady friend, but for some reason never sent. This, after looking at a page or two, she was about to condemn as nonsense, when an idea came across

her that if Mr. Frere was to form a just estimate of her powers, it was scarcely fair to select only the best things; so she popped in the sketch of the dinner-party as a kind of destitution test, to show how badly she *could* write.

Then came the most difficult part of the business—the letter to Frere. True, she had written to him before, acting as her father's amanuensis, but that was a different sort of thing altogether. Still, it must be done, and Rose was not a person to be deterred by difficulties; so she took a sheet of paper and wrote "Sir" at the top of it, and having done so, sat and looked at it till she became intensely dissatisfied. "Sir"—it seemed so cold and uncomfortable; so she took a second sheet and wrote, "Dear Sir." Yes! that was better, decidedly. She only hoped it was not too familiar in writing to a young man; but then, Mr. Frere was not exactly a young man; he was a great deal older than Lewis; above thirty most likely; and three or four-and-thirty was quite middle-aged; so the "Dear Sir" was allowed to remain.

"*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute,*" and having once started, it was not long before Rose's nimble pen had covered two sides of the sheet of paper, and the following letter was the result:—

"DEAR SIR,—I know not how to offer any excuse for the trouble I am about to give you, otherwise than by explaining the reasons which have induced me to apply to you; and, as I know your time is valuable, I will do so as briefly as I can. Do not think me forgetful of, or ungrateful for, your great kindness to Lewis, when I tell you that ever since I received my brother's letter informing me of his engagement as tutor to General Grant's ward, I have felt miserable at the idea of his working hard at an occupation which I fear must be distasteful to him, in order to provide for Mamma and myself the comforts we have hitherto enjoyed. It was impossible to prevent this in any way, for we tried to shake his determination, but in vain. Now I feel that I should be so much happier if I could assist, in ever so small a degree, in relieving him from his burthen; and the only possible idea that occurs to me (for he will not hear of my going out as governess) is that I might be able to earn something by my pen. With this view I have ventured to enclose for your perusal a few verses which I have written at odd times for my own amusement; and I trust to your kindness to tell me honestly whether they possess any merit or not. I dare not hope your opinion will be favourable; but if by possibility it should prove so, will you do me the additional kindness of advising me what steps to take in order to get them published. I have never been in London, but I have heard there are a good many booksellers who live there; and as I dare say you know them all, perhaps you would kindly tell me to which of them you would recommend me to apply. I have not told Mamma that I am writing, for, as I feel a presentiment that your answer will only prove to me the folly of the hopes I am so silly as to indulge, it is not worth while disturbing her about the matter. Once again thanking you for your extreme kindness to Lewis, and hoping that you will not

consider me too troublesome in thus applying to you, believe me to remain your sincerely obliged

“ROSE ARUNDEL.

“P.S.—I have enclosed a little prose sketch with the verses, but I am *quite sure* you will not like that. Perhaps, if Lewis has not left you when this arrives, you will be so very kind as not to say anything to him about it, as he would be sure to laugh at me.”

When Rose had finished this epistle she felt that she had done something towards attaining the object she had at heart, and went to bed feeling more happy than she had done since the receipt of Lewis's letter. Straightway falling asleep, she dreamt that she was introduced to Mr. Murray, who offered her £100 to write a short biographical memoir of General Grant for the “Quarterly Review.”

CHAPTER XIV.

PRESENTS TOM BRACY IN A NEW AND INTERESTING ASPECT.

THREE days passed by, and still poor Rose received no answer to her letter, but remained a prey to alternate hopes and fears and all “The gnawing torture of an anxious mind.” On the fourth arrived the following characteristic note:—

“MY DEAR MISS ARUNDEL,—I dare say you've been abusing me like a pick-pocket; at least I must have appeared to you deserving of such abuse, for treating your request so cavalierly; but the fact is, I have been down in a Cornish tin mine for the last two days, and only received your packet on my arrival in town, an hour ago. And now to business. I don't set up for a judge of poetry, though I know what pleases me and what doesn't (I should be a donkey if I did not, you'll say); for instance, the present school of ‘suggestive’ poetry doesn't suit me at all. But then I have an old-fashioned prejudice in favour of understanding what I read, and calling a railway locomotive a ‘*resonant steam eagle*,’ for instance, does not tend to simplify literature; the only thing such phrases ‘suggest’ to me is that it would be a great deal better if the authors were content to stick to plain English, and when they have such inexpressibly grand ideas, not to trouble themselves to express them at all. Your verses have at least one good point in them—they are so worded that a plain man may understand them; in fact, all that I have yet read I like—the feeling is invariably pure, true, and beautiful (your heart's in the right place, and no mistake); the language is well chosen, and sometimes eloquent; there are, of course, plenty of places where it becomes weak and young lady-like, but that was only to be expected. We can't all be men, unfortunately. I could not help laughing when you ‘supposed I knew’ all the booksellers and publishers in London

Heaven forbid! for in that case I should have a very miscellaneous acquaintance. However, I do know several, and I will go the first thing to-morrow morning and consult one of them—a gentleman on whose judgment I can rely as to what will be the most advisable course for *us* to pursue. I say *us*, because, as I don't mean to let the matter rest till I have succeeded, I consider myself a partner in the concern. Lewis parted from me in high health and very tolerable spirits. He left town, with General Grant, the same morning on which I started for Cornwall. You shall hear from me again when I can report progress. Don't write any more nonsense about giving me trouble: in the first place, the thing is no trouble; in the second, I should not mind it one bit if it were.

"I am yours very truly,

"RICHARD FRERE."

The first thing next morning Frere called upon his friend the publisher, who, as soon as he understood that nothing beyond advice was required of him, became very communicative and agreeable; glanced his eye over the verses and approved of them, though he added, with a Burleigh-like shake of the head, that he wished they were anything but poetry. Frere wondered why, and asked him. In reply he learned that the public mind had acquired a sadly practical bias, which leading him to suggest that poetry was the very thing of all others to bring it right again, he was further informed that the evil was much too deeply seated to be affected by so weak an application as the poetry of the present day; and the truth of this assertion appearing undeniable, the subject was dropped.

"The best thing for you to do with these MSS., Mr. Frere," continued his adviser, "would be to get them inserted in some popular periodical."

"Well, I don't object," returned Frere. "Which had I better send them to? There's 'Gently's Miscellany,' and the 'New Weekly,' and 'Gainsworth's Magazine,' and half-a-dozen more of 'em."

"What do you suppose would be the result of adopting such a line of conduct?" inquired his friend.

"Why, as the things are in themselves good, they'd probably put 'em in next month, and send a cheque for the amount, enclosed in a polite note asking for more."

"I fear not," was the answer. "A very promising young friend of mine sent a nicely written paper to the least exclusive of the periodicals you have just mentioned; hearing nothing of it, he ventured at the end of six months to write and inquire its fate. In reply he received a note from the editor, which appeared to him more explicit than satisfactory. It was couched in the following laconic terms:—'Declined with thanks.'"

"Phew! that's pleasant," rejoined Frere. "What would you advise, then, under the circumstances? I place myself quite in your hands."

His friend leaned back in his chair and considered the matter deeply. At length he seemed to have hit upon some expedient, for

he muttered with great emphasis, "Yes, that might do. He could if he would. Yes—certainly!" Then turning suddenly to Frere, he exclaimed, "Mind, you'll never breathe a word of it to any living being!"

"Not for the world," returned Frere. "And now, what is it?"

"You've heard of 'Blunt's Magazine'?"

"Yes; I've seen it in several places lately."

"No doubt; it's a most admirably conducted publication, and one which is certain to become a great favourite with the public. Now I happen to be acquainted with one of the gentlemen who edit it, and shall be happy to give you a note of introduction to him. But you must promise me to be most careful never to reveal his name."

"Certainly," rejoined Frere, "if you wish it. But may I venture to ask what it would signify if all London knew it?"

His companion turned upon him a look of indignant surprise; but perceiving that he made the inquiry in honest simplicity of heart, his face assumed an expression of contemptuous pity as he replied, in such a tone of voice as one would use to a little child who had inquired why it might not set light to a barrel of gunpowder, "My dear sir, you do not know—you cannot conceive the consequences. Such a thing would be utterly impossible."

He then wrote a few lines, which he handed to Frere, saying, "You will find him at home till eleven."

"And this mysterious name," observed Frere, glancing at the address, "is l—eh! nonsense!—Thomas Bracy, Esq. Why, he is an intimate friend of my own! That's famous. Oh! I'll have some fun with him. I'm sure I'm extremely obliged to you; good morning." So saying Frere seized his hat, shouldered his umbrella, and hurried off, overjoyed at his discovery.

The mendacious tiger, of whom we have already made honourable mention, answered Frere's inquiry as to whether his master was at home with a most decided and unequivocal negative, adding the gratuitous information that he had gone down to dine with his uncle at Hampstead the previous day and was not expected home till four o'clock that afternoon."

"Well, that's a nuisance," returned Frere. "I tell you what, boy, I'll step in and write your master a note."

"Yes, sir, certainly, if you please, sir; only we've been a having the sweeps hin, and the place is hall in a huproar, so as it's unpossibul to touch nothink."

At this moment a bell rung violently, and the boy, begging Frere to wait, bounded up the stairs with a cat-like rapidity, returning almost immediately with the information that "He was wery sorry, but he'd just been to the greengrocer's, and while he was hout master had comed home quite promiscuous."

"And how about the soot?" asked Frere, a light breaking in upon him.

"Please, sir, cook's been and cleaned it hup while I were gone."

"I thought so," returned Frere; "you're a nice boy!" Then

catching him by the collar of his jacket, he continued, "Tell me, you young scamp, how often do you speak the truth?"

The urchin, thus detected, glanced at Frere's face, and reading there that any attempt to keep up appearances must prove a dead failure, replied with the utmost *sang froid*, "Please, sir, whenever I can't think of nothink better."

"There's an answer," returned Frere meditatively. "Well, you need never learn swimming—water won't harm you; but mark my words, and beware of hemp." So saying he loosened his hold on the boy's collar and followed him upstairs.

The tiger, not having recognised Frere in his European habiliments, had merely told his master that a gentleman wished to see him on business; and Bracy, who had reason to expect a visit from a certain literary Don, had rushed into his dressing-room to exchange a very decidedly "fast" smoking-jacket for the black frock-coat of editorial propriety; for which reason Frere was left to entertain himself for a few minutes with his own society. After examining sundry clever caricature sketches of Bracy's, which evinced a decided talent for that branch of art, Frere seated himself in an easy-chair in front of a writing-table on which lay a mysterious document, written in a bold, dashing hand, which involuntarily attracted his attention. Perceiving at a glance that it contained no private matter, he amused himself by perusing it. For the reader's edification we will transcribe it:—

Blunt's Magazine, June. Sheets 3 and 4.

<i>Questions on Quicksilver</i>	4
<i>The Homeless Heart</i> (Stanzas by L. O. V. E.)	1
<i>Hist. Parallels, No. 3</i> (Cromwell and Cœur-de-Lion)	7
<i>L'Incomprise</i> (by the Authoress of <i>L'Inconnue</i>)	6
<i>Hard Work and Hard Food; or, How would you like it yourself? A Plea for the Industrial Classes</i>	5
<i>Dog-cart Drives</i> (by the Editor), Chap. 10, "The Spicey Screw;" Chap. 11, "Doing the Governor"	7
<i>Wanted something light, abt</i>	2

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The last item in this singular catalogue was written in pencil.

"Now I should like to know what all that means," soliloquised Frere. "Something light about two? A luncheon would come under that definition exactly—two *whats?* that's the question! Two pounds? It would not be particularly light if it weighed as much as that. Perhaps the figures stand for money—the prices they pay for the magazine articles, I dare say; 4—6—7. Now, if they happen to be sovereigns, that will suit my young lady's case very nicely. Ah! here he comes."

CHAPTER XV.

CONTAINS A DISQUISITION ON MODERN POETRY, AND AFFORDS
THE READER A PEEP BEHIND THE EDITORIAL CURTAIN.

THE position in which Frere had placed himself prevented Bracy from discerning his features as he entered, and he accordingly accosted his visitor as follows :—

“My dear sir, I am really distressed to have kept you waiting, but as you arrived I was just jotting down the result of a little flirtation with the Muse.”

“And that is it, I suppose?” observed Frere, turning his face towards the speaker and pointing to the document before alluded to.

“Why, Frere, is it you, man?” exclaimed Bracy in surprise. “As I’m a sinner, I took you for that learned elder, Dr. —. My young imp told me you were a gentleman who wished to see me on particular business. If that juvenile devil takes to telling lies *to* instead of *for* me, I shall have to give him his due for once, in the shape of a sound caning.”

“You may spare yourself the trouble,” returned Frere, “as by some accident he has only spoken the truth this time; for I hope you don’t mean to insinuate that I am anything but a gentleman, and I have most assuredly come to you on business—that is, always supposing Mr. — of — Street has informed me correctly in regard to your editorial functions.”

“What! has the *cacoethes scribendi* seized you also, and tempted you into the commission of some little act of light literature?” added Bracy.

“Thank goodness, no,” answered Frere. “I’m happy to say I’m not so far gone as all that comes to yet. No, this is a different case altogether,” and he then proceeded to inform his companion of Rose’s application, and the necessity which existed to make her talents available for practical purposes.

“Magazine writing affords rather a shady prospect for realising capital in these days,” observed Bracy, shaking his head discouragingly. “Let’s look at the young lady’s interesting efforts. Have you ever seen her? Arundel’s sister ought to be pretty. What’s this? ‘The Preacher’s Address to the Soul.’ Why, it’s a sermon in rhyme. Heaven help the girl! what’s she thinking of?”

“Read it and you’ll see. I like it very much,” returned Frere, slightly nettled at the reception his *protégée’s* productions appeared likely to meet with.

“Oh! it’s a sermon clearly,” continued Bracy; “here’s something about vanity and the grave. I heard it all last Sunday at St. Chrysostom’s, only the fellow called it *gwave* and *gwace*. He’d picked up some conscientious scruple against the use of the letter R, I suppose. It’s quite wonderful, the new-fangled doctrines they develop nowadays. Hum—ha—‘Making the desert home,’—rather a young idea, eh? ‘Happy birds,’—don’t like that, it puts one too much in mind of

'jolly dogs' or 'odd fish.' I should have said dicky birds, if it had been me; that's a very safe expression, and one that people are accustomed to. 'The joy of flowers,'—what on earth does she mean by that, now? I should say nobody could understand that; for the reason, by the way, it's the best expression I've seen yet. Poets be admired in the present day, must be utterly incomprehensible. We insert very little, but that's the rule I go by. If I can't understand one word of a thing, I make a point of accepting it; it's safe to become popular. 'Love for time, Heaven for eternity,'—well, that's all very nice and pretty, but I'm sorry to say it won't do; it's not suited to the tone of the Magazine, you see."

"I can't say I *do* see very clearly at present," returned Frere; "what kind of poetry is it that you accept?"

"Oh, there are different styles. Now here's a little thing I've got in the June part, 'The Homeless Heart, by L. O. V. E.' Her real name is Mary Dobbs, but she couldn't very well sign herself M.D.; people would think she was a physician. She's a very respectable young woman (such a girl to laugh), and engaged to an opulent stockbroker. Now listen:—

" 'Homeless, forsaken,
Deeply oppress'd,
Raving, yet craving
Agony's rest;
Bitterly hating,
Fondly relenting,
Sinning, yet winning
Souls to repenting;
When for her sorrow
Comes a to-morrow,
Shall she be bless'd?'"

"That's a question I can't take upon myself to answer," interrupted Frere. "But if those are in the style you consider suited to the tone of your Magazine, it must be a very wonderful publication."

"I flatter myself it is, rather," replied Bracy complacently. "But that's by no means the only style; here's a thing that will go down with the million sweetly. Listen to this," and as he spoke he extracted from a drawer a mighty bundle of papers labelled "Accepted Poetry," and selecting one or two specimens from the mass, read as follows:—

"THE COUNTESS EMMELINE'S DISDAINMENT.

- " Bitter-black the winter's whirlwind wail'd around the haunted hall,
Where the sheeted snow that fledged fester'd on the mouldering wall.
- " But his blacker soul within him childish calm appear'd to view,
And when gazing, 'twas amazing whence the sceptic terror grew.
- " Then her voice, so silver-blended, to a trumpet-blast did swell,
As she task'd him when she asked him, 'Mr. Johnson, is it well?'"
- " Ashen-white the curdled traitor paled before her eagle eye,
Whilst denying, in replying, deeper grew his perjury."

“There! I can’t stand any more of that, at any price!” exclaimed Frere, putting his hands to his ears. “Unless you wish to make me seriously ill, spare me the infliction of those detestable compound adjectives.”

“My dear fellow, you’ve no taste,” returned Bracy. “Why, that’s written by one of our best contributors; an individual that will make Tennyson look to his laurels, and do the Brownings brown, one of these days. But if that’s too grand for you, here’s a little bit of pastoral simplicity may suit you better:—

“‘TO A HERBLET, NAME UNKNOWN.

‘ Once upon a holiday,
 Sing heigho;
 Still with sportive fancy playing
 While all nature was a-maying,
 On a sunny bank I lay;
 Where the happy grass did grow,
 ’Neath the fragrant lime-tree row,
 Sing heigho!

‘ There a little fairy flower,
 Sing heigho!
 Glancing from its baby eyes
 With a look of sweet surprise,
 Grew beneath a bower,
 Brought unto my soul the dawning
 Of a mystic spirit warning,
 Sing heigho!

‘ Then I wept, and said, despairing,
 Sing heigho!
 Fate is dark, and earth is lonely,
 And the heart’s young blossoms only
 Render life worth bearing—’

“Now then, what’s the matter with you?” inquired Bracy, interrupting himself on seeing Frere snatch up his hat and umbrella.

“If you’re going to read any more of that, I’m off; that’s all,” returned Frere. “My powers of endurance are limited.”

“Oh, if you are positively such a Hottentot as to dislike it,” rejoined Bracy, “I’ll not waste any more of its sweet simplicity upon you; but, you’ll see, the gentle public will rave about it to an immense extent.”

“Now tell me honestly, Bracy—you don’t really admire that childish rubbish?”

Thus appealed to, Bracy’s face assumed an expression of most comical significance; and after pausing for a moment in indecision, he replied—

“Well, I’ve a sort of respect for your good opinion, Frere, and I don’t exactly like to send you away fancying me a greater ass than I am; so I’ll honestly confess that, what between affected Germanisms on the one hand and the puerilities of the Wordsworth-and-water

school on the other, the poetry of the present day has sunk to a very low ebb indeed."

"Then don't you consider it the duty of every honest critic to point this out, and so guide and reform the public taste as to evoke from the 'well of English undefiled' a truer and purer style?" returned Frere earnestly.

"My dear fellow, that all sounds very well in theory, but in practice, I'm afraid (to use a metaphor derived from one of the humane and intellectual amusements of our venerated forefathers), that cock won't fight. It may be all very well for some literary Don Quixote, with a pure Saxon taste and a long purse, to tilt at the public's pet windmills, because he conceives them to be giant abuses. If he meets with a fall, he need only put his hand in his pocket and purchase a plaster, getting a triple shield of experience in for the money. But it is far otherwise with a magazine. If that is to continue in existence it must pay; in order to pay it must be rendered popular; to make a thing popular you must go with the stream of public opinion, and not against it. The only chance is to head the tide and turn it in the direction you desire. But to attempt that a man ought to possess first-rate talent, and I'm free to confess that I, for one, do not; and therefore, you see, as people must be amused, I'm very willing to amuse them in their own way, as long as I find it pleasant and profitable to do so. *Voilà!* do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend this much," returned Frere gruffly, "that the ground of your argument is expediency and not principle; and I tell you plainly that does not suit me, and I'm afraid Miss Arundel is too much of my mind in that particular for her writings to suit your wonderful magazine; so the sooner I take my departure the better for your morning's work."

"Stay a moment, don't get on stilts, man," returned Bracy, resuming his examination of Rose's papers. "Is there nothing but verses? What have we here? 'My First Dinner-Party'—this seems more likely."

He paused, and ran his eye over several of the pages, muttering from time to time as he went along, "Yes, good lively style—quick powers of observation—a very graphic touch—bravo! ha! ha! here, listen to this—"

"Immediately before me stood a dish which even my inexperience believed itself able to recognise; it was jelly of some kind, with certain dark objects encased in it, as flies occasionally are in amber. These opaque portions I settled, in my own mind, must be preserved fruit, and accordingly (fearful lest, in my ignorance of fashionable dishes, I should say "yes" to some tremendous delicacy which might prove utterly impracticable), when invited to partake of it, I graciously signified my assent. Imagine my horror when, on putting the first mouthful to my lips, I discovered the jelly was savoury—*i.e.*, all pepper and salt, and the creature embedded in it a fragment of some dreadful fish! Eating the thing was out of the question; the mere taste I had taken of it made me feel uncomfortable: an attempt to conceal it beneath the knife and fork proved utterly futile. I glanced at the

butler, but he was too much absorbed in his own dignity and the dispensation of champagne to observe me; I gazed appealingly at a good-looking young footman, but he merely pulled up his shirt-collar foppishly, thinking he had made an impression; I even ventured to call, in a low voice, to the sprightly waiter who had eloped with my untouched plate of lamb five minutes before, but he did not hear me; and there I sat with a huge plateful of horrible food before me, which I could neither eat nor get rid of, "a cynosure for neighbouring eyes," forced, as my fears suggested, to run the gauntlet of all the mocking glances of the assembled company.'

"There," continued Bracy, "I call that a stunning description; I could not have done it better myself. The girl writes so easily! Let me see, 18—25—28 lines in a page of manuscript; there's not much of it, I think I can get it in. I want two pages of amusing matter in the fourth sheet."

"Ah! something light, about two. Now I understand," exclaimed Frere, pointing to the mysterious document on the table; "that was not a memorandum in regard to luncheon, then."

"A what?" returned Bracy, shouting with laughter. "No," he continued, as soon as he had in some measure recovered his composure, "that is the 'make-up,' as we call it, of the third and fourth sheets of the Magazine."

"Indeed!" returned Frere. "I should think it must require a great deal of careful reflection to select suitable articles and arrange them properly."

"Eh! no, not a bit; the thing's simple enough when you once get in the way of it. Have plenty of variety, that's the grand point—what one doesn't like, another will. Take large shot for big birds, and small shot for little ones, and then you'll bag the whole covey; that's my maxim. Now, look here: first we begin with a scientific article, 'Questions on Quicksilver.' There's not one reader in a hundred that can understand that paper when they've read it; and very few even of those who can take it in care two straws about quicksilver—why should they? But they all read it, because it's a cheap way of getting up the necessary amount of scientific jargon to hash into small talk. I never look at that man's papers myself; I know they're safe, though I can't understand a word of 'em—but they're a great help to the Magazine. Then comes our friend, the 'Homeless Heart.' I put that in as a drop of romantic barley-sugar to soften the women's throats after swallowing the science. Next we have 'An Historical Parallel.' Famous fellows they are; the principal dodge in writing them is to take an 'entirely new reading of the character,' as the actors say. In the present article, if I recollect right, they prove Cœur-de-Lion to have been a hypocritical fanatic, and Cromwell a chivalric, magnanimous enthusiast. It's safe to take, depend upon it. 'L'Incomprise' tells its own tale—it's as close an imitation of Eugene Sue and George Sand as English morality will tolerate, though the invention of gutta-percha, or some other elastic agent, enables even that stiff material nowadays to stretch to lengths which would astonish our grandmothers. Then comes the 'Plea for the Industrial Classes'—a regular savage

poke at the present Poor Law (we're obliged to do a little bit of political economy as well as our neighbours, you know); it's awfully heavy, but it will neutralise any ill effects 'L'Incomprise' may have had on fathers of families all the better. Lastly, there's my own little thing, 'Dog-cart Drives.' Ahem! have you seen that?"

"Not I," replied Frere; "I've no time for reading tra—I mean novels and that sort of thing."

"I believe it's liked; I hear it's a good deal talked about," continued Bracy with an air of bashful self-complacency. "'Bell's Life' spoke very handsomely of it last week; there were six whole lines devoted to it, I think. Upon my word I should like you to read it."

At this moment Frere suddenly discovered that he had remained over his time, and should be too late for some deeply interesting experiments that were to come off that morning at what his companion termed his science shop; so receiving an assurance from Bracy that Rose's sketch should be inserted in the Magazine, and that he would consider what would be her best mode of proceeding in regard to the poetry, the friends shook hands and parted, Frere promising to make himself acquainted with the subject-matter of "Dog-cart Drives" at an early opportunity.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS LIVINGSTONE SPEAKS A BIT OF HER MIND.

IT was a lovely morning in early summer, when the sun, shining into Lewis's bedroom at Broadhurst, aroused him from a heavy dreamless sleep, the result of his previous night's dissipation at Lady Lombard's. The sensation of waking for the first time in a strange place is usually a disagreeable one; there is an unfamiliar newness in the aspect of everything around us, an absence of old associations, which to an impressible disposition is singularly disheartening. This was peculiarly the case with Lewis; the costly furniture of the room, arranged with a stiff propriety, the spotless carpet, the chair-covers too clean and slippery to be sat upon, the bright cold mirrors, the polished grate, in which a fire would have been high treason, each and all suggestive of the chilling influence of that rigid disciplinarian Miss Livingstone, served painfully to realise his new position. Splendour without comfort was an anomaly he had never before encountered, and in his then frame of mind it aroused all the bitter feelings which even his strength of will was unable to subdue, and he mentally compared himself to a slave working in gilded chains, and longed for independence, no matter through what hardships, struggles, and dangers it must be attained. But there was a healthy energy about his mind which prevented his yielding to these morbid feelings; hastily dressing himself, he found his way into the pleasure garden, and as it was yet early, strolled onward through the park.

After wandering about for nearly an hour, the calm beauty of the scenery and the exhilarating freshness of the morning air producing their natural effect upon his spirits, it occurred to him that his absence might be commented upon, and possibly give offence; accordingly, he retraced his steps towards the house. Ignorant of the *locale*, however, he was unable to discover the door by which he had gone out, and after making one or two attempts in a wrong direction, was compelled to effect his entrance through a French window opening into a conservatory. Lewis possessed a great taste for, and some knowledge of botany, and his attention was at once attracted by the rare and beautiful plants around him. So completely was he engrossed by his admiration, that not until he heard his own name pronounced did he become aware that he was not the sole tenant of the conservatory. Turning at the sound, he perceived Annie Grant, in a very becoming costume, busily employed in altering the arrangement of certain flower-pots.

Before we proceed farther, it may be as well to afford the reader an insight into Lewis's feelings towards this young lady, as they were by no means of such a nature as might be expected from a young man towards a pretty and agreeable girl, with whom he was about to be domesticated. In order to account for his peculiar state of mind on this subject we must take a retrospective glance at an episode in Lewis's student life, which has been already alluded to in a conversation between Frere and his friend. About a year before the period at which our story opened Lewis had encountered, at a festive meeting of the worthy citizens of Bonn, the very pretty daughter of a wealthy shopkeeper, and struck by her bright eyes and a certain *naïve* simplicity of manner, had danced with her the greater part of the evening. Flattered by the attentions of the handsome young Englishman, the damsel, who (her simplicity being confined entirely to manner) was as arrant a little flirt as ever caused a heartache, took care that the acquaintance should continue; and while she was merely bent on adding to her train of admirers, Lewis fell in love with her as deeply as a man can do with a girl completely his inferior in mind as well as in station. Imagination, however, which at eighteen is alarmingly active, supplied all deficiencies, and Lewis continued to dream his lady-love was an angel, till one fine morning the fact of her elopement with a young German baron, who looked upon matrimony as a superfluous ordinance, induced him to alter his opinion. With the termination of the adventure the reader is already acquainted, but the effect upon Lewis's disposition was one which time might weaken but could never efface. The fatal lesson that one who seemed true and pure was not so, once learnt could never be forgotten; the seeds of mistrust were sown, and strive as he might, the perfect faith, the bright, eager confidence of youth, were lost to him for ever.

Annie, as the reader is aware, was unusually lovely, and Lewis accordingly regarded her in the light of a dangerous man-trap; besides this, oddly enough, she was by no means unlike an ethereal and spiritualised representation of "Gretchen"; the features and colouring were similar, and the arch simplicity of the *Fraulein's* manner was

part and parcel of Annie's very nature. The painful recollections which this resemblance excited added unconsciously to the prejudice (for it amounted to that) which Lewis had conceived against the General's daughter; but the true source of the feeling lay deeper. However circumstances may cause him to affect, or even to believe the contrary, there is in every man's heart a latent desire to render himself agreeable to any young and pretty woman into whose society he may be thrown, more especially where the individual is conscious of possessing powers of pleasing if he chooses to exert them; and even Lewis's slight experience of society had sufficed to enlighten him in regard to this point, on which the dullest are usually clear-sighted. But coupled with this feeling came the humiliating consciousness that although by birth and education Miss Grant's equal, the position he held in the family rendered him her inferior; and this idea was galling in the extreme to Lewis's haughty nature. Annie, on the other hand, profoundly ignorant of all these wheels within wheels, entertained the most amiable and benevolent intentions towards her new associate. She knew he was unfortunate, she saw he was a gentleman, and she had heard that he was undertaking a duty he disliked, for the sake of his mother and sister; and for all these reasons her woman's heart warmed towards him, and she determined to do what she was able to render his position as little painful as might be; moreover, she was sufficiently acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of her father and great-aunt to be aware that any particular kindness the young tutor would be likely to meet with in the family must emanate from herself. Accordingly, when Lewis, having replied to her cordial "Good morning, Mr. Arundel," by slightly raising his hat, and making a formal bow, was about to pass on, she renewed the attack by adding—

"May I trouble you to move this flower-pot for me? it is so heavy."

Thus appealed to, Lewis stopped short, and for a moment debated with himself the possibility of refusing; but without being actually ill-bred, such a possibility did not exist; so, resigning himself to his fate with a very ill grace, he deposited his hat on a vacant flower-stand, and tossing back his dark curls with the air of a sulky lion shaking his mane, he took the garden-pot, which indeed seemed too heavy for Annie's little hands, asking, with a stately coldness by no means in character with the mild nature of the inquiry—

"Where would you wish to have it placed, Miss Grant?"

"Here, if you will be so kind," returned the young lady, indicating the spot by pointing with the end of a pert little parasol.

Lewis, having installed the plant in its appointed place, was again about to take his departure, but ere he did so, glancing involuntarily at the effect of his labour, his quick eye at once discerned the object of the changes Annie was striving to effect, and perceived that, in order to carry out her design, several heavy flowers yet required moving. Nothing, however, was farther from his thoughts than the idea of volunteering his assistance, when Annie, catching the direction of his eye, continued—

"Yes, the White Camellia is too low."

"While the Rhododendron is as much too high," returned Lewis eagerly, and forgetting his proud scruples in the impulse of the moment, he set to work with the greatest energy to complete the arrangement which his correct taste acknowledged to be an improvement.

The Camellia had been exalted and the Rhododendron abased, and many other "pets of the parterre" had experienced sudden changes of position, and still Lewis worked with unabated zeal, and still his fair companion directed and approved, when just as, poised like a flying Mercury on one foot half-way up a high flower-stand, he was stretching to his utmost to install a gaudy Cactus, all red and green like a paroquet, on the topmost pinnacle, a stately tread was heard approaching, and General Grant entered the conservatory. Lewis coloured with mingled anger and annoyance at being detected in such a situation, but Annie good-naturedly came to his assistance. Tripping up to her father and taking both his hands, she exclaimed—

"Good morning, papa. Welcome to dear old Broadhurst once again. How pretty it all looks! But they have placed my flowers so stupidly, I must have every one of them altered. I've been working away for half-an-hour at least, and as Mr. Arundel happened to be passing, I pressed him into the service, for some of the pots are so heavy."

"Much too heavy for you to attempt to move, my dear," returned the General in a tone of marked disapproval; "but why did you not summon one of the gardeners to make the alteration you wished, without troubling Mr. Arundel, who must have had other duties to perform?"

"As it was your desire, sir, to be present at my introduction to my future pupil," replied Lewis, who had by this time reached *terra firma* and recovered his self-possession, "I have refrained from making any attempt to see him till I should have learned your further wishes on the subject. My time was therefore quite at Miss Grant's disposal, if I could be in any way useful to her."

"My daughter is obliged by your politeness, sir, but will not trespass upon it further," replied the General coldly. "My dear Annie," he continued, "it only wants ten minutes to nine; you will oblige me by preparing for breakfast. Punctuality is a quality by the neglect of which all order is subverted, propriety set at nought, much valuable time wasted which can never be recalled, and the comfort of a family totally destroyed. Your excellent aunt is aware of my opinion on this subject, and during the twelve years she has done me the favour to preside over my household she has never kept me waiting one minute."

"Well, dear papa, I'll do my best to please you," returned Annie; "but," she added, laying her hand on his shoulder caressingly, and looking up in his face with a glance half mischievous and half imploring, "you won't expect me to be so terribly perfect as Aunt Martha? Recollect, she is three times as old as I am, and ought therefore to be three times as wise."

The General tried to look displeased, but he could not resist Annie,

for he was human after all; so, stroking her glossy curls, he told her that Mrs. Botherfille (a serious schoolmistress, who, for the trifling consideration of £300 per annum, condescended to allow the youthful female aristocracy of the land to sit at her feet and learn from her lips how to regenerate society through the medium of frivolous accomplishments) had failed in curing her of talking nonsense, at which Annie laughed merrily and then tripped off, turning as she passed Lewis to take a last glance at the newly-arranged flowers, and saying, "Now, don't they look pretty, Mr. Arundel?"

As the directions in regard to Lewis and his pupil's separate establishment (for such the isolated suite of rooms they were to occupy might be considered) had not as yet been communicated to the servants, General Grant requested the favour of Lewis's company at breakfast with as much ceremony as he could have used if he had been inviting a royal duke to a banquet; and as a request from such a quarter was equivalent to a command, Lewis could only comply. Half a minute before the clock struck nine, Miss Livingstone, that human hedge-hog, rustled into the breakfast-room, more stiff and starched in mind and body than any other living creature. As for her cap, a railway train might have passed over it without injuring that rigid mystery, while her gown was at the least sabre, not to say bullet-proof. If ever there were a wife fitted for our Iron Duke, that adamant spinster was the woman—only that to have married her would have required more courage than twenty Waterloos!

As the clock struck nine the household servants made their appearance, and all the family knelt down (with the exception of Miss Livingstone, who, being evidently fashioned as the ancients believed elephants to be, without knee-joints, merely reared up against the breakfast-table, as the next best thing she could do), while the General read them a short, sharp, but polite prayer, after which he blessed them very much as if he were doing the reverse, and suffered them to depart. The breakfast was excellent as far as the commissariat department was concerned, and the tea was not so cold as might have been expected considering that Miss Livingstone poured it out.

Even Lewis's short acquaintance with that austere virgin's usual expression of countenance led him to believe that a darker shade than ordinary lowered upon her brow; nor was he mistaken, for after despatching a piece of dry toast with the air of an acidulated martyr, the spirit (we fear it was not an amiable one) moved her, and she spoke.

"I must say, General, your benevolence has rather overpowered your judgment, to my poor thinking, in this singular addition to the establishment at Broadhurst. I really consider that I ought to have been a little more clearly informed as to the facts of the case before these new arrangements were actually decided on."

"If you refer to Sir Walter Desborough, madam," returned the General sternly, "I must recall to your memory the fact of my having mentioned to you, this day week, my intention that my ward should reside at Broadhurst."

"I am not in the habit of forgetting any communication you do me

the honour of making to me, General Grant, nor have I forgotten the conversation to which you refer; but if you mentioned that your ward was a dangerous idiot, and that you expected me to preside over a private lunatic asylum, that circumstance certainly has escaped me."

The wrinkles on the General's forehead deepened as he replied with a glance towards Lewis, "You forget, Miss Livingstone, that we are not in private."

"Really," rejoined the lady, "if, as I believe, that *young*" (and she laid an ill-natured emphasis on the word) "gentleman has undertaken the duties of keeper——"

"Tutor," interposed the General sharply.

"Well, tutor, then, if you like to call it so," continued Miss Livingstone, "the name does not much signify. But if Mr. Arundel is to have the care of this dreadful boy, the sooner he knows what his duties will be, and sets about them, the better; for I tell you plainly, General Grant, that unless there's a man about the creature who can manage him, I won't sleep another night in the house with him. There's no trusting those idiots; we may all be murdered in our beds."

As the good lady, who had by this time got the steam up to a very high degree of pressure, hazarded the above uncomfortable suggestion, Annie, who had been listening with an expression of painful annoyance to her aunt's harangue, suddenly turned pale and glanced with a look of appealing inquiry towards her father, who replied to her rather than to Miss Livingstone in the following terms:—

"Really, my dear Annie, I am compelled to say that the fears with which your excellent relative" (and he looked bayonets at Minerva, who shook her head till her terrific cap rustled like an angry hail-storm) "would seek to inspire you are utterly without foundation." He paused, took a pinch of snuff viciously, as though it were gunpowder and he was priming himself for a fresh discharge; and thus prepared he turned to Lewis, saying—but we will reserve the volley for another chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTAINS MUCH FOLLY AND A LITTLE COMMON SENSE.

"THE truth of the matter is this, Mr. Arundel," began General Grant. "From a mistaken policy your future pupil has been indulged in every caprice of his weak intellect, till the slightest opposition to his wishes irritates him beyond all control that has yet been exercised over him; but as his only attendants are an old female domestic who was his nurse, and her son, a lad younger than Sir Walter himself, whom he has been foolishly permitted to look upon in the light of a companion, this is not so much to be wondered at."

"It will be a difficult task to eradicate faults of temper which have

been allowed to become habitual, especially where the reasoning faculties are defective," observed Lewis thoughtfully.

"You may well say that, sir," chimed in Miss Livingstone. "His reasoning faculties (as you please to term them) are *so defective*, that in my humble opinion the boy is neither more nor less than a fool; and you may as well try to drive a pig straight as to talk sense to a fool. But how a man so particular as General Grant can have brought such an inmate into his family, and then expect that things are to go on with the order and precision that——"

"MADAM!" began the General in a voice of thunder, his stock of patience utterly exhausted by this indirect mode of attack. But Annie, with a degree of tact and moral courage for which Lewis had by no means been disposed to give her credit, laid her hand imploringly on her father's arm, and whispered a few magical words which served to avert the storm that had appeared inevitable. An awkward pause ensued, which was broken by the General, who, rising majestically from his chair, informed Lewis that he should request his attendance in half-an-hour; then casting a withering glance at Miss Livingstone, which caused that respectable porcupine of private life to bristle up if possible more fiercely than before, he quitted the room. No sooner had her nephew-in-law's retreating footsteps ceased to echo through the long corridor than the good lady, freed from the restraint of his presence, did then and there openly, avowedly, and with much vehemence, utter a declaration of war to the knife with that gallant officer, issued a protest against the introduction of "rampant idiots" into that heretofore peaceful family, and finally assert her own liberty of action by promulgating her determination to depart forthwith, leaving her companions to contemplate the agreeable contingencies of "being frightened out of their wits every day, and murdered in their beds all night."

Having in some degree relieved her mind by this explosion, she applied the superfluous steam still remaining to the purpose of locomotion, her crisp schako rending the air, and her high-heeled shoes knocking sharp little double knocks, as of an angry postman, against the polished oak floor as she swept along.

And these "pleasant passages" were the first votive offering which Lewis saw presented to the Lares and Penates of Broadhurst.

General Grant sat bolt upright in his easy-chair, as if he were on his charger, and his face wore an expression of scrutinising authority, as of a commander about to review his troops, when Lewis, in obedience to his summons, entered the library.

"Take a chair, Mr. Arundel. I have desired the attendance of Sir Walter Desborough, and expect he will be here immediately."

In compliance with this request, Lewis seated himself to await the arrival of his future pupil; but the minutes glided by, and still no pupil appeared. At length, just as the General's small stock of patience became exhausted and he had begged Lewis to ring the bell, the butler returned, saying that it was impossible to induce Sir Walter to leave his room unless his female attendant might come with him. General Grant frowned portentously, glanced expressively

towards Lewis, muttering, "Some of the evil effects of a grievous system of neglect," then added, to the servant, "You may desire Mrs. Peters to accompany Sir Walter Desborough."

"One of the first points to which you will have to direct your attention, Mr. Arundel," continued the General as the domestic quitted the apartment, "is to induce my ward to dispense with the society of this person and her son. He may retain their services as attendants, but must be taught no longer to regard them as companions."

As he spoke the door opened and admitted three individuals. Of these, the first who claims our notice was the unfortunate young baronet who was to be Lewis's future charge. He appeared about fourteen, but was tall for that age; his figure was slight and not ungraceful, and his features were handsome; his forehead was high, but narrow and receding; his eyes were bright and clear, though totally devoid of expression, and there was an appearance of weakness and irresolution about the mouth, which too clearly indicated his want of intellect. Mrs. Peters was a very stout old lady, on whom the cares of life and a rare specimen of the female costume of some bygone age appeared to sit easily; her outline might have suggested to an imaginative beholder the idea of a huge pillow which had "come alive" and made itself a gown out of one of the chintz bed-curtains, forgetting the waist. Her conversation was embellished by a redundancy of mild ejaculations, amongst which a benediction on her own "heart alive," and an apostrophe to a solitary possessive pronoun which had lost its noun, and agreed with nothing in particular, stood pre-eminent. Her stock of ideas, which was by no means inconveniently large, had been presented to her in her youth, and required altering to suit the present fashion. Still she was a good old woman in her way; her "heart alive" was a very kind one; and she doated on poor Walter, spoiling and indulging him till she had made even a greater fool of him than nature had intended. The trio was completed by her hopeful son Robert, or, as he was more familiarly termed, Bob Peters, who, one year younger than Sir Walter, was as clever and mischievous an imp as ever indued a page's livery and bore a splendid crop of buttons to fascinate society. Pressing close to his nurse's side and dragging the pretty page after him by the wrist, Walter entered the alarming presence of his guardian and his tutor, hanging back like a startled colt the moment he perceived a stranger.

"Walter, come here; I want to introduce you to this gentleman," exclaimed General Grant in the blandest tone he could command; but in vain—Walter only hung his head and shrank closer to his protectress.

"Oh, my! Walter dearie, go to the General. Bless my heart alive, you ain't so silly as to be afraid of *him*," exclaimed Mrs. Peters, emphasising the *him* as though it referred to a pet lamb or a tame rabbit.

"Go in and win, Master Walter; the gentleman won't bite yer," suggested Bob in an audible whisper.

But their remonstrances produced no effect upon Walter, and served only to increase General Grant's irritation.

"He must be taught obedience, sir," he remarked quickly, appealing to Lewis. "Nothing can be done until he becomes obedient;" then turning to the old nurse, he continued, "Mrs. Peters, Sir Walter will not require your attendance at present; you may leave the room, and take your son with you."

"I'm afeard, sir, you won't be able to do nothing with Master Walter without one of us stops with him. You see, he's kind of used to us," urged Mrs. Peters.

"I shall feel obliged by your leaving the room, Mrs. Peters. When I require your advice I will inform you of the fact," returned the General, walking with stately steps towards the door, which he held partially open to permit the egress of the servants, while he prevented Walter from following them.

As he saw his friends depart the boy raised his eyes, which gleamed with mingled fear and anger, to General Grant's face, but cold inflexibility was written there so unmistakably that even the darkened perceptions of the idiot could not fail to perceive it; and apparently feeling instinctively that resistance would be unavailing, his countenance assumed a sulky, dogged expression, and he suffered himself to be led to a seat without opposition. But, despite this success, the General seemed as far from gaining his point as ever; neither kindness nor coercion could induce Walter to pay the slightest attention to the remarks addressed to him, or to utter a single word. Any one, to have seen him at that moment, would have imagined him to be hopelessly imbecile. That such was not the case, however, Lewis, who without interfering openly had been closely observing him from the moment of his entrance, felt convinced. He had particularly watched the play of his features, and had remarked when he first came in that they were characterised by an expression of fear and shyness rather than of stupidity, and that it was not until his guardian had banished those whom he knew well, and in whom he had confidence, that they assumed the look of stolid sulkiness which they now wore. After making several unsuccessful attempts to elicit from his ward some proof of intelligence, General Grant at length quitted the room in search of his daughter, actuated thereunto by a vague consciousness that his own manner might possibly be deficient in conciliatory power, and that Annie, from the fact of her belonging to the softer sex, possessed a decided advantage over him in this particular. Availing himself of this opportunity, Lewis caught up a young kitten which was playing about the room, towards which he had observed Walter cast several furtive glances; and caressing the little animal as he held it in his arms, he approached his pupil, saying quietly—

"I'm sure you like the kitten, Walter, she is so playful and pretty?"

The boy made no answer, but the sullen look in his face gradually gave place to a milder expression, and he glanced from Lewis to the kitten with an appearance of intelligence, for which any one who had seen him a minute before would not have given him credit. Lewis

saw that he had touched the right string, and continued in the same kind and gentle manner—

“We must make a great pet of the kitten. She will play with us and amuse us nicely.”

As he said this Walter drew closer to him, and seeming, in his interest about the kitten, to forget his fear of the stranger, held out his hands for the little creature to be given to him.

“Will you be kind to her if I let you have her?” continued Lewis.

Walter nodded in token of assent, and Lewis handed him the kitten, which he immediately began to fondle and play with, laughing with childish glee at its gambols. After amusing himself in this manner for several minutes he suddenly turned to Lewis and asked in a half-whisper—

“Do you like ponies, too?”

Delighted at this proof of the success of his attempt to win his pupil's confidence, Lewis signified his intense affection for ponies in general, and inquired whether Walter possessed one. On receiving an affirmative nod he continued—

“And are you very fond of riding it?”

This question seemed to perplex the boy, for he made no reply, and a half-puzzled, vacant expression banished the gleam of intelligence which had lighted up his features. Lewis repeated the inquiry in two or three different forms, but with no better success. A pause ensued, during which the young tutor pondered with himself the best means of calling forth and strengthening the faint germs of intellect which evidently existed in the clouded mind of the poor idiot, when Walter again looked up and exclaimed abruptly—

“Bob says I'm to ride the pony when somebody comes to take care of me.”

“And I am that somebody,” returned Lewis, smiling good-naturedly.

“You shall ride the pony to-day if you like.”

This seemed to please him, for he nodded and laughed, and resumed his gambols with the kitten. Suddenly a new idea appeared to strike him, for his face became clouded, and drawing close to Lewis, he whispered, pointing to the door by which General Grant had left the apartment—

“Don't tell him, or he won't let me go.”

“Why should you think so, Walter? That gentleman is your guardian, and means to be very kind to you,” returned Lewis; but Walter shook his head and repeated—

“Don't tell him; he won't let me go.”

At this moment the General returned, accompanied by Annie, whose feelings of sympathy and pity were slightly tempered by the fears which Miss Livingstone had laboured industriously to instil into her mind. Lewis drew the General on one side and gave him an outline of all that had passed during his absence, adding, that although it was of course too soon for him to judge with any degree of accuracy to what extent they might proceed, it was evident his pupil possessed some reasoning powers which cultivation might develop. And he was going on to add that harshness appeared to him likely rather to

increase than diminish the evil, when his attention was attracted by an exclamation of anger from Walter.

The moment General Grant returned his ward had relapsed into his former state of sullen apathy, and all Annie's attempts to induce him to notice her only appeared to increase his obstinacy, till at length she began to stroke the kitten, which he still held in his arms. This, for some unexplained cause (probably because he fancied she might be about to injure his favourite, or to deprive him of it), irritated him beyond control, and forgetting his fear in his anger, he uttered the exclamation above alluded to, and struck at her fiercely with a riding-whip which he had brought in with him. Springing forward, however, before the blow could descend, Lewis caught his uplifted arm and held it in an iron grasp, while in a grave but stern voice he said—

“Walter, I am surprised at you. Attempt to strike a lady! You must never do such a thing again.”

The calm, impressive manner in which he uttered these words appeared to produce a beneficial effect in subduing the boy's irritation; for after making one furious but unavailing attempt to free himself, he sat perfectly still and unresisting. Nothing, however, could induce him to make friends with Annie, or to allow her to touch his beloved kitten, though when Lewis caressed it, and even took it in his arms, he appeared well contented.

A fortnight's careful study of the young baronet's character only served to confirm the impressions Lewis had received during this first interview. That he possessed some powers of reasoning and reflection was evident; but the great difficulty lay in finding a key to the workings of his mind by aid of which these powers might be strengthened and developed. Any direct question seemed to puzzle and confuse him, and the only plan which appeared to offer any hope of success was, if possible, to discover some train of thought (if the vague and desultory fancies which flitted across his feeble brain deserved to be so called), and then to lead him gently on by suggesting new ideas, some of which he might adopt and retain. But it was an up-hill task; and often when Lewis, with a degree of calm perseverance which in one of his eager and impetuous disposition could scarcely have been looked for, had succeeded in making him acquire, as he believed, a leading idea on which he hoped to base some superstructure of elementary knowledge, a look of hopeless vacuity would show that no progress had been made, and that the labour must all be gone through again. At other times some shrewd remark or pertinent question would take Lewis as it were by surprise, and induce him to imagine that he had underrated his pupil's mental capacity, and that the fault must lie in his own inexperience of such cases. But there was much to be unlearned as well as to be taught. As is often the case in persons of weak intellect, the mere animal tendencies were unusually strong. He was subject to violent bursts of passion, if his will were in the slightest degree thwarted, which it required all Lewis's firmness and strength of character to contend against successfully. Occasionally fits of melancholy would seize him, during which he would sit for hours without speaking, his head resting dejectedly on his hand, and

nothing appearing able to interest or amuse him. If not prevented, he would eat so voraciously as to injure his health. He was also indolent and averse to active exertion of any kind. But Lewis took much pains to teach him to ride, and the exercise thus obtained tended greatly to strengthen his constitution. His fondness for animals was one of the most amiable points in his disposition. He and Faust ere long became inseparable, and Lewis found the dog a most useful auxiliary in inculcating—by example, not precept, for Faust could not *quite* talk—the necessity of implicit obedience.

A month soon glided by, and at its expiration Lewis informed General Grant that if he still wished him to undertake the care of his ward he was willing to do so; an offer of which that noble commander joyfully availed himself, being in his secret soul equally surprised and pleased at the degree of success which had already attended Lewis's efforts, and only too glad to secure the services of one who could and would save him all further difficulty in regard to the onerous and troublesome responsibility which he had taken upon himself. For the next six months of his residence at Broadhurst Lewis saw but little of the family. During the greater part of that time the General was absent on a visit to some relations in Scotland, whither his daughter accompanied him. Miss Livingstone, having supplied herself with a resident victim in the person of Miss Susan Pinner, an unhappy little fourteen-year-old cousin once removed (the further the better from such a relative, we should imagine), spent her time very much to her own satisfaction in daily offering up the helpless sacrifice thus acquired at the altar of her evil temper, and in tyrannising over the poor of the neighbourhood with most excruciating benevolence. A sick family was a rare treat to this venerable scourge. Nauseous were the medicines she forced down the throats of the destitute, aggravating the directions with which she tortured the suffering, hateful the dietary on which she nourished all sick persons and young children! Truly an irritating poor man's plaster was that sphinx of modern society, Minerva Livingstone, and Œdipus himself would never have guessed at one-half her modes of ingeniously tormenting indigent merit. Fortunately, working out the details of this ferocious philanthropy occupied so much of the good lady's time that Lewis enjoyed a happy immunity from her attentions, and was allowed to put in practice his theories for the improvement of his pupil without let or hindrance; and it was with a degree of pleasure, which was in itself sufficient reward for his trouble, that he perceived his plans likely to succeed beyond his most sanguine expectations. Affairs were in this position when—but such an interesting disclosure requires a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LEWIS RECEIVES A MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION, AND IS RUN AWAY WITH BY TWO YOUTHFUL BEAUTIES.

THE arrival of the post-bag was an interesting event to Lewis, as almost the only pleasure he allowed himself was a rapid interchange of letters with his sister; and to this correspondence was he indebted for an amount of warm sympathy, judicious advice, and affectionate interest in his pursuits which tended greatly to relieve the monotony and diminish the irksomeness of his situation; but with the exception of Rose and (occasionally) Frere, his correspondents were exceedingly limited in number, and their epistles few and far between. It was then a matter of no small surprise to him to receive a business-like-looking letter in an unknown handwriting. To break the seal (which bore the impression of the letters J. and L. united in a flourishing cipher that at first sight looked like a bad attempt to delineate a true lover's knot) was the work of a moment. The contents were as follows:—

“SIR,—My partner and myself, having some connection with Warlington, were cognisant of the death of your late lamented father, which sad event was reported to have been caused by the sudden discovery of some important information contained in a public journal. It is in our power to impart to you the nature of that information; but as we have every reason to believe its importance has not been over-rated, we are only prepared to do so on the following terms:—viz., the present receipt of ten guineas, and a bond pledging yourself to pay to us the sum of £200 should the information prove as valuable as we conceive it to be. Awaiting the favour of a speedy answer,

“We have the honour to remain, Sir,

Yours obediently,

“JONES & LEVI, *Attorneys-at-Law.*

“— *Street, Old Bailey.*”

“What a strange letter!” soliloquised Lewis, after perusing it carefully for the second time. “The writer is evidently acquainted with the circumstances of my poor father's death, but that proves nothing; the newspaper story rests on the evidence of the library-keeper at Warlington, and he probably told it to every one who came into his shop for the next week; and this tale may have been invented to suit the circumstances, with a view to extort money. One has heard of such rogueries; still, in that case, why insist on the £200 bond? That seems as if Messrs. Jones & Levi themselves had faith in the value of their information; or it may only be done in order to give me that impression. I'll send the letter up to Richard Frere and ask him to ferret out these gents—I dare say they *are* thorough gents. Walter, I will not allow you to give Faust all your gloves to play with; that is the third pair he has bitten to pieces this week. Faust! drop it,

sir! Do you hear me? That's right—good, obedient dog! Now for Master Richard."

So saying he took a pen and wrote, in a delicately-formed yet free and bold hand, the following note:—

"DEAR OLD FRERE,—Certain individuals, signing themselves 'Jones & Levi,' have seen fit to favour me with the enclosed mysterious communication, which on the face of the thing looks very like an attempt to swindle. As there is, however, just a remote possibility that something may come of it (for their account of the circumstances preceding my poor father's death tallies exactly with the recital my sister gave me on my return), you will, I am sure, add one more to your many kindnesses by investigating this matter for me. You must bear in mind that £10 notes are by no means too plentiful with me, and that, under present circumstances, my bond for £200 would scarcely be worth as many pence. My poor charge progresses slowly; he has become much more docile and tractable, and is considerably improved in manners and general amiability, but his mental capacity is lamentably deficient; his reasoning powers and usual habits of thought are about on a par with those of an average child of six or seven years old; many intelligent children of that age are greatly his superiors in intellect: still, he makes visible progress, and that is recompense sufficient for any expenditure of time and trouble. He appears much attached to me, and (perhaps for that very reason—perhaps from the necessity to love something, which exists in the nature of every man worthy of the name) I have become so deeply interested in him, that duties which six months ago I should have reckoned irksome in the extreme, I now find a real pleasure in performing. I bore you with these details because . . . because you are so old a friend that I have acquired a prescriptive right to bore you when I like. As Walter and Faust (who clearly knows that I am writing to you, and sends you an affectionate wag of the tail) are becoming impatient at the length of my epistle, there being a walk in prospect dependent on my arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, the sooner I do so the better.

"Yours ever, L. A."

As Lewis folded and sealed this missive a servant entered with a note on a silver waiter, saying, as he presented it, "For you, sir. I am desired to wait while you read it."

It was written in a stiff, formal hand, and ran as follows:—

"MISS LIVINGSTONE presents her compliments to Mr. Arundel, and requests the favour of an interview with him."

"What is in the wind now, I wonder?" thought Lewis, but he only said, "Tell Miss Livingstone I will do myself the pleasure of waiting on her immediately," and the servant retired.

Minerva was enthroned in state in the small drawing-room, the large one being an awful apartment, dedicated to high and solemn social convocations, and by no means lightly to be entered. Care sat

upon her wrinkled brow, and looked as uncomfortable there as in such a situation might reasonably have been expected. As Lewis entered, this remarkable woman rose and performed as near an approach to a curtsy as her elephantine conformation would permit; then, graciously motioning her visitor to a seat, she growled an inquiry after the well-being of his pupil, promulgated a decidedly scandalous account of the state of the weather, with a disheartening prophecy appended relative to meteorological miseries yet to come; and having thus broken her own ice, dived into the chilly recesses of her cold water system, and fished up from its stony depths the weighty grievance that oppressed her.

It appeared that the same post which had conveyed the mysterious document from Messrs. Jones & Levi had also brought a letter from General Grant containing the intelligence that he was about to return home forthwith, that the house was to be prepared for the reception of a large Christmas party, and that he wished Miss Livingstone to pay a round of visits preparatory to the issue of innumerable notes of invitation, by which the neighbourhood was to be induced to attend sundry festive meetings at Broadhurst; and all this was to be done more thoroughly and on a larger scale than usual, for some mysterious reason in regard to which the General was equally urgent and enigmatical. But Minerva shall speak for herself.

"Having thus, Mr. Arundel, made myself acquainted with General Grant's wishes (fourteen beds to be ready this day week, and not even the hangings put up on one of them—but men are so inconsiderate nowadays), I proceeded to give Reynolds (the housekeeper) full and clear instructions (to not one of which did she pay proper attention—but servants are so careless and self-conceited nowadays) as to all the necessary domestic arrangements. I then desired the coachman might be informed that I should require the carriage to be ready for use at two o'clock to-morrow (as you are perhaps aware, sir, that since the General's departure for Scotland I have restricted myself to a simple pony-chaise). Judge of my amazement when I was told there were no horses fit for use! I begged to see the coachman instantly, but learned that he was confined to his bed with influenza. The second coachman is in Scotland with the General, so that in fact there was not a creature of sufficient respectability for me to converse with to whom I could give directions about the matter. Under these circumstances, which are equally unexpected and annoying, I considered myself justified in applying to you, Mr. Arundel. Would you oblige me by going through the stables and ascertaining whether anything can be devised to meet the present emergency? I am aware that the service I require of you is beyond the strict routine of your duties; but you must yourself perceive the impossibility of a lady venturing among stablemen and helpers without showing a disregard to that strict rule of propriety by which it has been the study of my life to regulate my conduct."

Having reached this climax, Minerva glanced with an air of dignified self-approval towards Lewis and began a very unnecessary process of refrigeration with the aid of a fan apparently composed,

like its mistress, of equal parts of cast-iron and buckram. Lewis immediately signified his readiness to undertake the commission, and promising to return and report progress, bowed and left the room.

On reaching the stables a groom attended his summons, and, after the fashion of his race, entered into a long explanation of the series of untoward circumstances to which the present state of equine destitution might be attributed, in the course of which harangue he performed, so to speak, a fantasia on the theme, "And then do you see, sir, coachman being hill," to which sentence, after each variation, he constantly returned. The substance of his communication was as follows:—Shortly before the General's departure one of the carriage horses had fallen and broken his knees, and its companion having an unamiable predilection for kicking, the pair were sold and a couple of young unbroken animals purchased, which, after a summer's run, were destined to replace the delinquents. Shortly after this the General fell in love with and bought a pair of iron-grey four-year-olds, also untrained. All these young horses were now taken up from grass and about to be broken in, but the coachman's illness had interrupted their education."

"Well, but are neither pair of the young stock available?" inquired Lewis.

"I'm afeared not, sir," was the reply. "The bays ain't never been in harness, and the iron-greys only three times."

"Oh, the greys *have* been in harness three times, have they?" resumed Lewis. "Let us take them out to-day and see how they perform."

"If you please, sir, I am only pad groom, and I can't say as I should feel myself disactly compertent to drive them wild young devils."

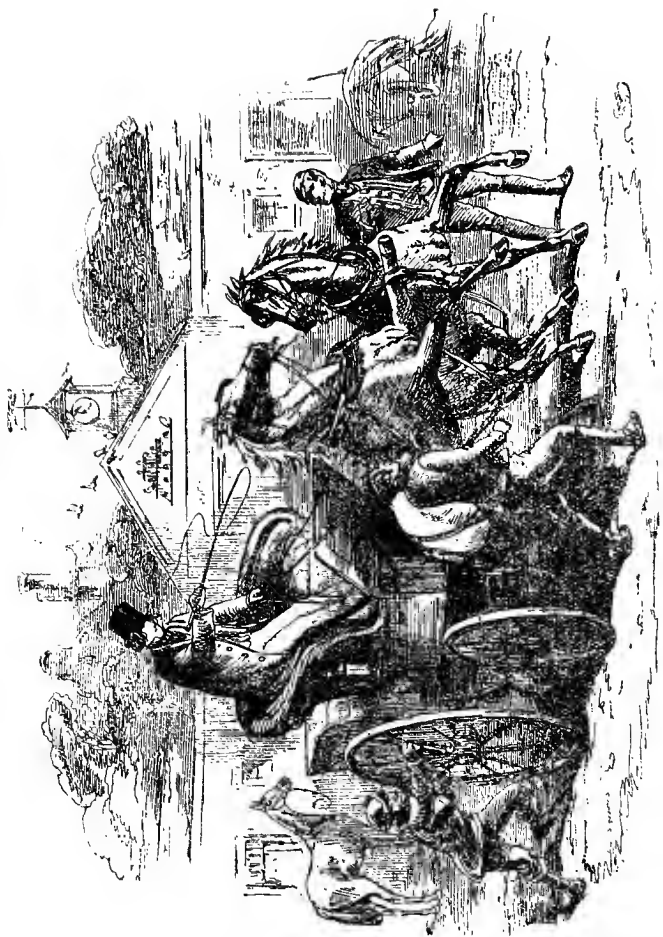
"Bring out that mail phaeton; put on the break harness, and I'll drive them myself," returned Lewis.

"But, if you please, sir," began the groom in a tone of remonstrance.

"My good fellow, you waste time in talking. Of course if anything goes wrong in consequence of your obeying my directions, I alone shall be answerable; but nothing will go wrong if your harness is sound," returned Lewis quickly.

The man, seeing the young tutor was determined, summoned one of his fellows, and in a short time the phaeton was made ready and the horses harnessed and led out. They were a splendid pair of dark iron-greys, with silver manes and tails; their heads, small and well set on, their sloping shoulders, and fine graceful legs, spoke well for their descent; but they snorted with fear and impatience as they were led up to their places, and their bright full eyes gazed wildly and restlessly around.

"Be quiet with them!" exclaimed Lewis as one of the men laid a rude grasp on the rein to back the near-side horse into his place. "You never can be too quiet and steady with a young horse. Soho, boy! what is it then? nobody is going to hurt you," he continued,



A VIOLENT "ANTI-PROGRESS" MOVEMENT.

patting the startled animal, and at the same time backing him gently into the required position.

The operation of putting-to was soon completed; and Lewis saying, "You had better lead them off if there is any difficulty in getting them to start," took the reins in his hands and sprang up lightly but quietly. Seating himself firmly, he asked, "Now, are you all ready?" and receiving an answer in the affirmative, continued, "Give them their heads;" then making a mysterious sound which may be faintly portrayed by the letters "tchick," he endeavoured to start his horses. But this was no such easy matter. The near-side horse the moment he felt the collar ran back, pulling against his companion, who returned the compliment by rearing and striking with his fore-feet at the groom who attempted to hold him.

"Steady there!" cried Lewis. "Pat his neck; that's right. Quiet, horse! stand, sir! One of you call those men here," he added, pointing to a couple of labourers who were digging in a slip of ground near. "Now, my men," he resumed as they came up, "take hold of the spokes of the hind wheels and move the carriage on when I give you the signal. Are you ready? Stand clear; all right." As he spoke he again attempted to start the horses, and this time more successfully.

The animal which had reared at the first attempt sprang forward, and finding the weight which he had probably fancied was immovable yield to his efforts, appeared anxious to proceed, but the other still hung back, and was partly dragged forward by his yoke-fellow, partly pushed on by the men who were propelling the carriage. Lewis again tried mild measures, but without effect; and at length, considering that the soothing system had been carried far enough, he drew the point of the whip smartly across the animal's shoulder. In reply to this the recusant flung up his heels as high as the kicking-straps would permit; but on a second and rather sharper application of the thong he plunged forward and threw himself into the collar with a bound that tried the strength of the traces; then pulling like a steam-engine, appeared resolved to revenge himself on his driver by straining every sinew of his arms to the utmost pitch of tension. But rowing, fencing, and other athletic exercises had rendered those arms as hard as iron; and though the swollen muscles rounded and stood out till his coat-sleeve was stretched almost to bursting, Lewis continued to hold the reins in a vice-like grasp, and the fiery horses, arching their proud necks and tossing the foam-flakes from their champing jaws, were compelled to proceed at a moderate pace. The grooms ran by their sides for a short distance, then, at a sign from Lewis, one of the men watched his opportunity and scrambled up while the phaeton was still going on; the other, having opened a gate leading down a road through the park, remained gazing after them with looks of the deepest interest.

"Well, sir, you've managed to start 'em easier than I expected," observed the groom, as, in compliance with Lewis's desire, he seated himself at his side. "Coachman was a good half-hour a getting 'em hout of the yard last time as they was put-to; that near-sider wouldn't take the collar no how."

"And yet he'll turn out the better horse of the two if he s judiciously managed," returned Lewis. "He has higher courage than his companion, though they're both splendid animals. They only require careful driving and working moderately every day to make as good a pair of carriage-horses as a man need wish to sit behind."

"It ain't the first time as you've handled the ribbons by a good many, I should say, sir," continued Bob Richards (for that was the man's name, dear reader, although I've never had an opportunity of telling you so before). "I see'd as you know'd what you was about afore ever you got on the box."

"*Before* I got up!" returned Lewis. "How did you manage that, my friend?"

"Why, sir, the furst thing as you did was to cast your eye over the harness to see as all was right; then, afore ever you put your foot on the step you took the reins into your hands, so that the minute you was up you was ready for a bolt, hif so be it had pleased Providence to start the 'orses off suddenly. Now, anybody as wasn't used to the ways of four-footed quadrupals wouldn't never have thought of that."

"Your powers of observation do you credit," returned Lewis, with difficulty repressing a smile. "You are right, I have been accustomed to driving, as you imagine." And as he spoke the remembrance of scenes and persons now far away came across him, and he thought with regret of pleasant hours passed with his young associates in Germany, when the mere fact of his being an Englishman caused him to be regarded as an oracle on all matters connected with horse-flesh.

While this conversation was taking place the iron-greys had proceeded about a mile through the park, dancing, curvetting, and staring on all sides, as though they would fain shy at every object they discerned.

"They are gradually dropping into a steadier pace, you see," observed Lewis; "they'll be tired of jumping about, and glad to trot without breaking into a canter, when they get a little warm to their work. Quiet, boy, quiet!" he continued, as the horses suddenly pricked up their ears and stared wildly about them; "gently there, gently! What in the world are they frightened at now?"

The question did not long remain a doubtful one, for in another minute a hollow, rushing sound became audible, and a herd of deer, startled by the rattling of the carriage, broke from a thicket hard by, and bounding over the tall fern and stunted brushwood, darted across the road, their long thin legs and branching antlers, indistinctly seen in the grey light of an autumn day, giving them a strange and spectre-like appearance. But Lewis had no time to trace fanciful resemblances, for the horses demanded all his attention. As the sound of pattering feet approached they began to plunge violently; at the sight of the deer they stopped short, snorting and trembling with fright; and when the herd crossed the road before them, perfectly maddened with terror they reared till they almost stood upright; then, turning short round, they dashed off the road at right angles, nearly overturning the phaeton as they did so, and breaking into a mad

gallop, despite all their driver's efforts to restrain them, tore away with the speed of lightning. For a few seconds the sound of the wind whistling past his ears, and oppressing his breathing to a painful degree, confused Lewis and deprived him of the power of speech; but the imminence of the danger, and the necessity for calmness and decision, served to restore his self-possession, and turning towards his companion, who, pale with terror, sat convulsively grasping the rail of the seat, he inquired—

“Can you recollect whether there are any ditches across the park in this direction?”

“There ain't no ditches, as I recollects,” was the reply, “but there's something a precious sight worser. If these devils go straight ahead for five minutes longer at this pace, we shall be dashed over the bank of the lake into ten foot water.”

“Yes, I remember; I see where we are now. The ground rises to the left, and is clear of trees and ditches, is it not?” asked Lewis.

The groom replied in the affirmative, and Lewis continued: “Then we must endeavour to turn them; do you take the whip, stand up, and be ready to assist me at the right moment. What are you thinking of?” he continued, seeing that the man hesitated and was apparently measuring with his eye the distance from the step to the ground. “It would be madness to jump out while we are going at this rate. Be cool, and we shall do very well yet.”

“I'm agreeable to do whatever you tells me, only be quick about it, sir,” rejoined the groom. “For if it comes to jumping hout, or sitting still to be drowned, hout I goes, that's flat, for I never could abear cold water.”

“I suppose the reins are strong, and to be depended on?” inquired Lewis.

“Nearly new, sir,” was the reply.

“Then be ready; and when I tell you, exert yourself,” continued Lewis.

While these remarks passed between the two occupants of the phaeton, the horses still continued their mad career, resisting successfully all attempts to check the frightful speed at which they were hurrying on towards certain destruction. As they dashed past a clump of shrubs, which had hitherto concealed from view the danger to which they were exposed, the full peril of their situation became evident to the eyes of Lewis and his companion. With steep and broken banks, on which American shrubs, mixed with flags and bulrushes, grew in unbounded luxuriance, the lake lay stretched before them, its clear depths reflecting the leaden hue of the wintry sky, and a slight breeze from the north rippling its polished surface. Less than a quarter of a mile of smooth greensward separated them from their dangerous neighbour. An artist would have longed to seize this moment for transferring to canvas or marble the expression of Lewis's features. As he perceived the nearness and reality of the danger that threatened him, his spirit rose with the occasion, and calm self-reliance, dauntless courage, and an energetic determination to subdue the infuriated animals before him, at whatever risk, lent a

brilliance to his flashing eye, and imparted a look of stern resolve to his finely cut mouth, which invested his unusual beauty with a character of superhuman power such as the sculptors of antiquity sought to immortalise in their statues of heroes and demigods. Selecting an open space of turf unencumbered with trees or other obstacles, Lewis once more addressed his companion, saying—

“Now be ready. I am going to endeavour to turn them to the left, in order to get their heads away from the lake and uphill; but as I shall require both hands and all my strength for the reins, I want you to stand up and touch them smartly with the whip on the off-side of the neck. If you do this at the right moment, it will help to bring them round. Do you understand me?”

Richards replied in the affirmative, and Lewis, leaning forward and shortening his grasp on the reins, worked the mouths of the horses till he got their heads well up; then assuring himself by a glance that his companion was ready, he checked their speed by a great exertion of strength; and tightening the left rein suddenly, the groom at the same moment applying the whip as he had been desired, the fiery steeds, springing from the lash and yielding to the pressure of the bit, altered their course, and going round so sharply that the phaeton was again within an ace of being overturned, dashed forward in an opposite direction.

“You did that uncommon well, to be sure, sir,” exclaimed Richards, drawing a long breath like one relieved from the pressure of a painful weight. “I thought we was over once, though; it was a precious near go.”

“A miss is as good as a mile,” returned Lewis, smiling. “Do you see,” he continued, “they are slackening their pace; the hill is beginning to tell upon them already. Hand me the whip; I shall give the gentlemen a bit of a lesson before I allow them to stop, just to convince them that running away is not such a pleasant amusement as they appear to imagine.”

So saying, he waited till the horses began sensibly to relax their speed; then holding them tightly in hand, he punished them with the whip pretty severely, and gave them a good deal more running than they liked before he permitted them to stop, the nature of the ground (a gentle ascent of perfectly smooth turf) allowing him to inflict this discipline with impunity.

After proceeding two or three miles at the same speed he perceived another cross-road running through the park. Gradually pulling up as he approached it, he got his horses into a walk, and as soon as they had once again exchanged grass for gravel he stopped them to recover wind. The groom got down, and gathering a handful of fern, wiped the foam from their mouths and the perspiration from their reeking flanks.

“You’ve given ’em a pretty tidy warming, though, sir,” he observed. “If I was you I would not keep ’em standing too long.”

“How far are we from the house, do you imagine?” inquired Lewis.

“About three mile, I should say,” returned Richards. “It will take you nigh upon half-an-hour, if you drives ’em easy.”

Lewis looked at his watch, muttering, "More than an hour to Walter's dinner-time." He then continued, "Get up, Richards; I have not quite done with these horses yet;" adding, in reply to the man's questioning glance as he reseated himself, "I'm only going to teach them that a herd of deer is not such a frightful object as they seem to imagine it."

"Surely you're never agoin' to take 'em near the deer again, Mr. Arundel; they'll never stand it, sir," expostulated Richards.

"You can get down if you like," observed Lewis, with the slightest possible shade of contempt in his tone. "I will pick you up here as I return."

Richards was a thorough John Bull, and it is a well-known fact that to hint to one of that enlightened race that he is afraid to do the most insane deed imaginable is quite sufficient to determine him to go through with it at all hazards. Accordingly, the individual in question pressed his hat on his brows to be prepared for the worst, and folding his arms with an air of injured dignity, sat sullenly hoping for an overturn, which might prove him right, even at the risk of a broken neck.

Lewis's quick eye had discerned the herd of deer against a dark background of trees which had served to screen them from the less acute perceptions of the servant, and he now contrived, by skirting the aforesaid belt of Scotch firs, to bring the phaeton near the place where the deer were stationed without disturbing them, so that the horses were able clearly to see the creatures which had before so greatly alarmed them. It has been often remarked that horses are greatly terrified by an object seen but indistinctly, at which, when they are able to observe it more closely, they will show no signs of fear. Whether for this reason, or that the discipline they had undergone had cooled their courage and taught them the necessity of obedience, the iron-greys approached the herd of deer without attempting to repeat the manœuvre which had been so nearly proving fatal to their driver and his companion. Lewis drove them up and down once or twice, each time decreasing the distance between the horses and the animals, to the sight of which he wished to accustom them, without any attempt at rebellion on their part beyond a slight preference for using their hind legs only in progression, and a very becoming determination to arch their necks and point their ears after the fashion of those high-spirited impossibilities which do duty for horses in Greek friezes and in the heated imagination of young lady artists, who possess a wonderful (a *very* wonderful) talent for sketching animals. Having continued this amusement till the deer once again conveyed themselves away, Lewis, delighted at having carried his point and overcome the difficulties which had opposed him, drove gently back to Broadhurst; and having committed the reeking horses to the care of a couple of grooms, who began hissing at them like a whole brood of serpents, returned to make his report and soothe the tribulation of that anxious hyæna in petticoats, Miss Martha Livingstone.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHARLEY LEICESTER BEWAILS HIS CRUEL MISFORTUNE.

FRERE'S answer to Lewis's note made its appearance at Broadhurst on the morning of the second day after that on which the events narrated in the previous chapter took place. It ran as follows :—

“DEAR LEWIS,—I think I've told you before—(if it wasn't you it was your sister, which is much the same thing)—not to write such a pack of nonsense as ‘adding to my many kindnesses,’ and all that sort of stuff, because it's just so much time and trouble wasted. I see no particular kindness in it, that's the fact. You and she live in the country, and I in town; and if there is anything that either of you want here, why of course it's natural to tell me to get or to do it for you; and as to apologising, or making pretty speeches every time you require anything, it's sheer folly; besides, I *like* doing the things for you. If I didn't I wouldn't do them, you may depend upon *that*; so no more of such rubbish ‘an you love me.’ And now, touching those interesting, or rather interested, individuals, Messrs. Jones & Levi. I thought when I read their letter they were rascals or thereabouts, but a personal interview placed the matter beyond doubt; and if you take my advice, you'll see them—well, never mind where—but keep your £10 in your pocket, that's all. Depend upon it, they are more used to making rich men poor than poor ones rich. However, I'll tell you all their sayings and doings, as far as I am acquainted therewith, and then you can judge for yourself. As soon as I received your letter I trudged off into the city, found the den of thieves—I mean the lawyer's office—of which I was in search, sent in my card by an unwashed Israelite with a pen behind each ear and ink all over him, whom I took to be a clerk, and by the same un-savoury individual was ushered into the presence of Messrs. Jones & Levi. Jones was a long cadaverous-looking animal, with a clever, bad face, and the eye of a hawk; Levi, a fat Jew, and apparently a German into the bargain, with a cunning expression of countenance and a cringing manner, who gave one the idea of having been fed on oil-cake till he had become something of the sort himself; a kind of man who, if you had put a wick into him, wouldn't have made a bad candle, only one should so have longed to snuff him out. Well, I soon told these worthies what I was come about, and then waited to hear all they had to say for themselves. The Gentile, being most richly gifted with speech, took upon him to reply—

“‘Let me offer you a chair, Mr. Frere, sir. Delighted to have the honour of making your acquaintance. I speak for my partner and myself—eh, Mr. Levi?’

“‘In courshe, shir. Moosh playsure, Misthur Vreer, shir,’ muttered Levi, who spoke through his nose, after the manner of modern Israelites, as if that organ were afflicted with a permanent cold.

“When I had seated myself Jones returned to the attack by

observing: 'Our letter contained a certain definite and specific offer. Does Mr. Arundel agree to that, Mr. Frere, sir?'

"'Mr. Arundel has placed the matter entirely in my hands, Mr. Jones,' replied I; 'and before I can agree to anything I must understand clearly what benefit my friend is likely to derive from the information hinted at in your letter.'

"'May I inquire, Mr. Frere, sir, whether you are a professional man?' asked Jones.

"'If you mean a lawyer, Mr. Jones,' replied I, 'I am thankful to say I am not.'

"I suppose he did not exactly relish my remark, for he resumed, in a less amicable tone than he had used before—

"'I believe the letter to which I have already referred contained a clear statement of the *only*' (he emphasised the word strongly) 'terms upon which we should be disposed to communicate the information,' and he glanced towards his partner, who echoed—

"'De *only* turmsh."

"'Then, gentlemen,' said I (gentlemen, indeed!), 'I beg most distinctly to inform you that my friend shall never, with my consent, pay £10 down and become liable for £200 more, this liability depending on a contingency which you have no doubt provided against, on the mere chance that some information in your possession may refer to the exciting cause of his father's death and prove valuable to him.'

"'De informationsh ish mosht faluaple,' broke in Levi.

"'I beg pardon, Mr. Levi,' exclaimed Jones quickly, 'but I believe we agreed this matter was to be left to my management?'

"Levi nodded his large head and looked contrite, while Jones continued: 'In that case, Mr. Frere, sir, I have only to add that if Mr. Arundel refuses to comply with our terms we shall not part with the information on any others. At the same time, I should advise him to reconsider the matter, for I do not hesitate to say that I quite coincide with Mr. Levi in his opinion concerning the importance of the information which is in our possession.'

"As he said this an idea occurred to me, and I replied—

"'Suppose, instead of the bond for £200 in the event of some contingency which may never occur, Mr. Arundel were willing to pay £20 down for the information, would you agree to that?'

"'Say vive and dirtysh,' put in the Jew; his dull eyes brightening at the prospect of money. 'Say vive and dirtysh, and it shall pe von pargainsh.'

"'Would you agree to take that sum, Mr. Jones?' asked I.

"He glanced at his partner with a slight contraction of the brow and shook his head; but the spirit of avarice aroused in the Jew was not so easily to be put down, and he continued, in a more positive tone than he had yet ventured to use—

"'Yesh, he dosh agree. Me and my bardner ve vill take the vive and dirtysh poundsh, ready monish, Mr. Vreer.'

"'Not quite so fast, my good sir,' returned I. 'If you are so very ready to give up the bond for £200, to be paid in case the information should prove as valuable as you assert it to be, the natural inference

is that you yourself have mighty little faith in the truth of your assertion; and as I happen to be pretty much of that way of thinking also, I shall wish you both good morning.'

"So saying, I put on my hat and walked out of the room, leaving the Jew and the Gentile to fight it out to their own satisfaction.

"I had not a very strong affection for lawyers before, and I can't say this visit has served to endear the profession to me particularly. You know the old story of the man who defined the difference between an attorney and a solicitor to be much the same as that between an alligator and a crocodile. Well, Messrs. Jones & Levi realised such a definition to the life, for a more detestable brace of rascals I never encountered; and depend upon it, the less you have to do with them the better; at least, such is the opinion of yours for ever and a day (always supposing such an epoch of time may exist),

"RICHARD FRERE."

"So," exclaimed Lewis, refolding the letter, "that chance has failed me. Well, I never expected anything would come of it; and yet—heigho! I certainly was born under an unlucky star. I think Frere was rather precipitate. According to his account of his proceedings, he seems to have felt such an intense conviction that the men were rascals that he called on them rather for the purpose of exposing them than to investigate the matter. He prejudged the question. However, I have no doubt the result would have been the same in any case. What a bore it is that men will be rogues! I shall have out those horses again after Walter has got through his lesson. If they go quietly I shall take him with me for a drive to-morrow." And thus communing with himself, he summoned Walter and commenced the usual morning routine.

Miss Livingstone had, by Lewis's advice, ordered post-horses to the carriage, and was in that way enabled to accomplish her round of visits. Lewis carried out his intention of driving the iron-greys, who conducted themselves with so much propriety that on the following day he took his pupil with him, and finding the drive pleased and amused the poor boy he repeated it every fine day. Thus a week slipped away, and the time for the General's return arrived. It was late on the afternoon of the day on which he was expected, and Lewis was wearily assisting poor Walter to spell through a page of dissyllables, when that peculiar gravel-grinding sound became audible which, in a country house, necessarily precedes an arrival. Then there was a great bustle as of excited servants, a Babel-like confusion of tongues, bumps and thumps of heavy luggage, much trampling of feet, ringing of bells and slamming of doors; then the sounds grew fainter, were remitted at intervals, and at last ceased altogether. The house was no longer masterless—General Grant had returned. Walter's attention, by no means easy to command for five minutes together at the best of times, became so entirely estranged by the commotion above alluded to, that Lewis closed the book in despair and told him to go and play with Faust, who, sitting upright on a rug in front of the fire, was

listening with the deepest interest to all that passed in the hall, and was only restrained from barking by a strict sense of propriety operating on a well-disciplined mind. The boy gladly obeyed, and Lewis, resting his aching head on his hand, fell into deep thought—he thought of old times, when, head of his class at a public school, alike leader and idol of the little world in which he moved, his young ambition had shaped out for itself a career in which the bar, the bench, the senate, were to be but stepping-stones to the highest honours to which energy and talent might attain; and he contrasted his present position with the ideal future his boyish fancy had depicted. Then he bethought him of the tyrant who commanded that a living man should be chained to a corpse, and considered how the cold and numbing influence of the dead, gradually paralysing the vital energy of the living, was, as it were, typical of his own fate. He could not but be conscious of unusual powers of mind, for he had tested them in the struggle for honours with the deep and subtle thinkers of Germany, and had come off victorious; and to reflect that these talents, which might have ensured him success in the game of life, were condemned to be wasted in the wearying attempt to call forth the faint germs of reason in the mind of an almost childish idiot! The thought was a bitter one! and yet for months past he had felt resigned to his fate; and the deep interest he took in his pupil's improvement, together with the time such a quiet life afforded for reflection and self-knowledge, had rendered him contented, if not what is conventionally termed happy. To what then should he attribute his present frame of mind? At this moment a tap at the study door interrupted his meditations, and he was unable to pursue his self-analysis further. Had he done so, he might possibly have discovered that pride, his besetting sin, lay at the root of the evil. As long as he lived in comparative seclusion his duties sat easily upon him; but now that he was again about to mix in society, his position as tutor became galling in the extreme to his haughty nature. As he heard the summons above mentioned he started from his reverie, and sweeping his hair from his forehead by a motion of his hand, exclaimed, "Come in." As he spoke the door opened, and our old acquaintance, Charley Leicester, lounged into the room.

"Ah! how do you do, Arundel?" he began in his usual languid tone. "I know all the ins and outs of this place, and I thought I should find you here—this used to be *my* den once upon a time; many a holiday's task have I groaned over in this venerable apartment. Is that your incubus?" he continued in a lower tone, glancing towards Walter. "Handsome features, poor fellow! Does he understand what one says?"

"Scarcely, unless you speak to him individually," returned Lewis. "You may talk as you please before him, the chances are he will not attend; but if he does, he will only understand a bit here and there, and even that he will forget the next moment, when some trifle occurs to put it out of his head. Walter, come and shake hands with this gentleman!"

Thus spoken to, Walter turned sheepishly away, and stooping down,

hid his face behind Faust. Lewis's mouth grew stern. "Faust, come here, sir!" The dog arose, looked wistfully at his playfellow, licked his hand lovingly, then walking across the room, crouched down at his master's feet.

"Now, Walter, look at me." At this second appeal the boy raised his eyes to Lewis's face. "Go and shake hands with Mr. Leicester."

"Don't worry him on my account, pray, my dear Arundel," interposed Leicester good-naturedly.

"The General makes a great point of his being introduced to every one; and I make a great point of his doing as I bid him," returned Lewis with marked emphasis.

But it was unnecessary, if meant as a hint to Walter, for his tutor's eye appeared to possess a power of fascination over him. No sooner did he meet his glance than he arose from his kneeling position, and going up to Leicester held out his hand saying, "How do you do?"

Charley shook hands with him kindly, asked him one or two simple questions, to which he replied with tolerable readiness; then observing that his eyes were fixed on a silver-mounted cane he held in his hand, he inquired whether he thought it pretty, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, added, "Then you may take it to amuse yourself with, if you like."

A smile of childish delight proved that the offer was an acceptable one; and carrying off his treasure with him and calling Faust, who on a sign from his master gladly obeyed the summons, he betook himself to the farther end of the room, which was a very large one, and began playing with his canine associate. Leicester gazed at him for a moment or two, and then observed—

"What a sad pity! Such a fine-grown, handsome lad, too! Why, in a year or two he will be a man in appearance, with the mind of a child. Does he improve much?"

"Yes, he improves steadily, but very slowly," returned Lewis.

Leicester wandered dreamily up to a chimney-glass, arranged his hair with an air of deep abstraction, pulled up his shirt-collars, caressed his whiskers, then separating the tails of a nondescript garment, which gave one the idea of a cut-away coat trying to look like a shooting-jacket, he extended his legs so as to form two sides of a triangle, and subjecting his frigid zone to the genial influence of the fire, he enjoyed for some minutes in silence the mysterious delight afforded to all true-born Englishmen by the peculiar position above indicated. At length he sighed deeply and muttered, "Heigho! it's no use thinking about it."

"That depends on what it is, and how you set to work to think," returned Lewis.

"That may do as a general rule," continued Leicester, "but it won't apply to the case in point. The thing I was trying to cipher out, as the Yankees call it, is the incomprehensible distribution of property in this sublunary life. Now look at that poor boy—a stick for a plaything and a dog for a companion make him perfectly happy. Those are his only superfluous requirements, which together with eating, drinking, clothing, and lodging might be provided for £300 a year.

Instead of that, when he is twenty-one he will come into from £8000 to £10,000 per annum, besides no end of savings during his minority. Well, to say nothing of your own case" (Lewis's cheek kindled and his eye flashed, but Leicester, absorbed in his own thoughts, never noticed it, and continued), "though with your talents a little loose cash to give you a fair start might be the making of you—just look at my wretched position,—the son of a peer, brought up in all kinds of expensive habits, mixing in the best set at Eton and at Oxford, the chosen associate of men of large property, introduced into the highest society in London—of course I must do as others do, I can't help myself. There are certain things necessary to a young man about town just as indispensable as smock-frocks and bacon are to a ploughman. For instance, to live one must dine—to dine one must belong to a club. Then London is a good large place, even if one ignores everything east of Temple Bar; one must keep a cab if but to save boot-leather—that entails a horse and a tiger. Again, for four months in the year people talk about nothing but the opera—one can't hold one's tongue for four months, you know—that renders a stall indispensable. It's the fashion to wear white kid gloves, and the whole of London comes off black on everything, so there's a fine of 3s. 6d. a night only for having hands at the end of one's arms. The atmosphere of the metropolis is composed chiefly of smoke—the only kind of smoke one can inhale without being choked is tobacco smoke; besides, life without cigars would be a desert without an oasis—but unfortunately Havannahs don't hang on every hedge. I might multiply instances *ad infinitum*, but the thing is self-evident—to provide all these necessaries a man must possess money or credit, and I unfortunately have more of the latter than the former article. It is, as I have explained to you, utterly impossible for me to exist on less than—say £1500 a year; and even with my share of my poor mother's fortune and the Governor's allowance, my net income doesn't amount to £800; *ergo*, half the London and all the Oxford tradesmen possess little manuscript volumes containing interesting reminiscences of my private life. It's no laughing matter, I can assure you," he continued, seeing Lewis smile; "there's nothing cramps a man's"—here he released a coat-tail in order to raise his hand to conceal a yawn—"augh! what do you call 'em?—energies—so much as having a load of debt hanging round his neck. If it hadn't been for those confounded Oxford bills checking me at first starting, 'pon my word I don't know that I might not have done something. I had ideas about a parliamentary career at one time, I can assure you, or diplomacy—any fool's good enough for an *attaché*. Now, if I had that poor boy's fortune, and he had my *misfortune*, what an advantage it would be to both of us; he'll never know what to do with his money, and I should—rather! Just fancy me with £10,000 a year, and a coat on my back that was paid for. By Jove, I should not know myself. Ah, well! it's no use talking about it; all the same, I am an unlucky beggar."

"But," interposed Lewis eagerly, "if you really dislike the life you lead so much, why don't you break through all these trammels of

conventionality and strike out some course for yourself? With £800 a year to ward off poverty, and the interest you might command, what a splendid career lies before you! Were I in your position, instead of desponding I should deem myself singularly fortunate."

"So you might, my dear fellow," returned Leicester, after pausing for a minute to regard Lewis with a smile of languid wonder. "So you might with your talents, and—and wonderful power of getting up the steam and keeping it at high pressure. I dare say we should see you a Field Marshal if you took to the red cloth and pipe-clay trade; or on the woosack if you preferred joining the long-robed gentlemen. Now, I haven't got that sort of thing in me: I was born to be a man of property, and nothing else; and the absurdity of the thing is the bringing a man into the world fit only for one purpose, and then placing him in a position in which, to use the cant of the day, he can't 'fulfil his mission' at any price. It's just as if nature were to form a carnivorous animal, and then turn it out to grass."

Having delivered himself of this opinion with the air of a deeply injured man, the Honourable Charles Leicester consulted a minute Geneva watch with an enamelled back, and replacing it in his waistcoat pocket, continued, "Five o'clock; I shall just have time to smoke a cigar before it is necessary to dress for dinner. I presume tobacco is a contraband article in the interior of this respectable dwelling-house?"

"A salutary dread of Miss Livingstone's indignation has prevented me from ever trying such an experiment," returned Lewis.

"Well, I won't run the risk of offending the good lady," replied Leicester. "Aunt Martha has a wonderful knack of blighting the whole family for the rest of the day if one happens to run against one of her pet prejudices. By the way, you must have found her a most interesting companion?"

"We are great friends, I can assure you," rejoined Lewis. "She condescends to patronise me most benignantly; but I have not spoken half-a-dozen times with her in as many months."

"I suppose she has enlightened you as to the events about to come off during the next three weeks."

"By no means. Beyond the fact of the General's return, and the information that the house was to be filled with people, Miss Livingstone has allowed me to remain in a state of the most lamentable ignorance."

"What! have not you heard that the county is vacant, and the General has been persuaded to allow himself to be nominated as a candidate on the conservative interest?"

"But I thought he was already member for the borough of A——?"

"Yes; he will resign that if he succeeds for the county. Oh, you're quite in the dark, I see; we mean to stir heaven and earth to get him in. My father gives him all his interest—Bellefield is coming down to look up the tenantry. You know we (that is, Belle and the Governor, worse luck) have large estates in the county. Belle can do a little bit of love-making in between whiles, and so kill two birds with one stone. And who else do you think is coming?—a very

great man, I can assure you ; no less a personage, in fact, than—*ar—the De Grandeville!* He has been induced to—*ar—*” (and here he mimicked De Grandeville’s pompous manner inimitably) “*throw his little influence—ar—into the scale, and—ar—show himself on the hustings, and—ar—arrange one or two matters which will in fact—ar—render the thing secure!* The plain truth being that he really is a good man of business, and the General has engaged him as an electioneering agent. Well, then, there are a lot of people coming besides; and balls and dinners will be given to half the county. In short, the General means to do the thing in style, and spend as much money as would keep me out of debt for the next three years. Several parties are to arrive to-morrow, so the General brought Annie and me down with him as a sort of advanced guard. There will be some fun, I dare say; but an awful deal of trouble to counterbalance it. I shall lose my cigar, though, if I stand gossiping here any longer. Let me see, the nearest way to the stables will be to jump out of that window; deduct the distance saved from the amount of exertion in leaping, and the remainder will be the gain of a minute and a half. Well, time is precious, so off we go. I suppose you appear in the course of the evening? Take care, Walter; that is right.”

Thus saying, he flung open the window, sprang out with more agility than from his usual listless movements might have been expected, pulled the sash down again, and having nodded good-naturedly to Walter, disappeared.

General Grant felt and expressed himself greatly delighted at the marked improvement which had taken place in his ward’s manner and appearance, and attributing it with justice to Lewis’s judicious management, that young gentleman rose many degrees in his employer’s favour. The General was essentially a practical man—he was endowed with a clear head, and (save where prejudice interfered) a sound judgment, and being happily devoid of that inconvenient organ, a heart (whence proceed, amongst other reprehensible emigrants, the whole host of amiable weaknesses, which merely gain for their proprietor that most useless, because unsaleable, article—affection), he looked upon his fellow-creatures as machines, and weighing them in the balance, patronised those only who were not found wanting. Lewis had proved himself a good teaching machine, and the General valued him accordingly.

“The great point now, Mr. Arundel,” he said, “is to endeavour to expand your pupil’s mind. You have developed in him (and I give you great credit for the degree of success you have attained) powers of acquiring knowledge,—those powers must be cultivated; he must have opportunities afforded him of seeing people and amassing facts for himself; and to this end it is my wish that he should mix as much as possible in society. I am about to entertain a large party at Broadhurst, and I conceive that it will be a desirable opportunity to accustom Sir Walter to the presence of strangers, and to enable him, by the force of example acting on his imitative powers, to acquire the manners and habits of those of his own rank. I therefore propose that after two o’clock on each day your pupil and yourself should join the family

circle and enter into any schemes for amusement or exercise which may be arranged. I consider myself most fortunate," continued the General, with a little patronising inclination of the head towards Lewis, "in having secured the services of a gentleman whom I can with such entire satisfaction present to my friends."

In compliance with this injunction Lewis was forced, much against his will, to withdraw from the retirement under the shadow of which he had hitherto contrived to screen himself from those annoyances to which his dependent situation exposed him, and which his sensitive nature led him especially to dread. On the following day arrivals succeeded one another with great rapidity, and when Lewis joined the party after luncheon there were several faces with which he was unacquainted. One, however, immediately arrested his attention, and turning to Leicester, he inquired the name of the person in question.

"Eh! who is the man with moustaches, did you say? What! don't you know him?" exclaimed Leicester, if, indeed, the slow, languid manner in which that young gentleman was accustomed to promulgate his sentiments can be properly so termed. "How very odd! I thought everybody knew *him*; that's my *frère aîné*, Bellefield; come with me, and I'll introduce you."

"Excuse me," returned Lewis, drawing back with a flushed cheek as the recollection of the scene on the banks of the Serpentine came vividly before him. "I had no idea it was your brother; I never imagined for a moment——"

"My dear Arundel, don't excite yourself; as a general rule, there's nothing in this life worth getting up the steam about," returned Leicester, drawing on a kid glove. "Bellefield will be extremely happy to make your acquaintance—in fact, he is always extremely happy. If you were to cut your throat before his very eyes he would be extremely happy, and if he thought you did it well, probably fold his arms, ask what you would take for the razor, and be extremely happy to buy it of you. But as he'll be constantly here, there exists a positive necessity for you to know him—so come along."

Thus saying, Charley Leicester linked his arm in that of Lewis and carried him off, *volens volens*, to be introduced to his brother.

Lord Bellefield having seen Lewis only once before, and under very peculiar circumstances, did not immediately recognise him; and having made up his mind that for electioneering purposes it was necessary to bear all species of social martyrdom amiably, underwent his introduction to Lewis with great resignation, curling up his moustaches and showing his white teeth in a ready-made smile—of which article he had always a stock on hand—most condescendingly.

Lewis's was, however, a face that once seen it was not easy to forget. Moreover, there was at that moment an expression gleaming in his dark eyes not altogether consistent with the conventional indifference befitting a mere social introduction, and Lord Bellefield was too close an observer not to notice it.

"I've a strange idea I've seen you somewhere before, Mr. Arundel," he remarked.

"If I am not much mistaken," returned Lewis, "your lordship once

did me the honour," and he laid a slightly sarcastic emphasis on the words, "to offer me a sum of money for a favourite dog."

There was something in Lewis's manner as he uttered these words which showed that he had neither forgotten nor forgiven the insult that had been offered him. Lord Bellefield perceived it, and replied, with a half-sneer—

"Ay, I recollect now—you jumped into the water to fish him out; and I naturally imagined that, as you appeared to set such store by him, you must expect to make money of him. Have you got him still?"

Lewis replied in the affirmative, and his lordship continued—

"Well, I'll give you your own price for him any day you like to name the sum."

Without waiting for an answer he turned away and began conversing in an undertone with his cousin Annie.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME OF THE CHARACTERS FALL OUT AND OTHERS FALL IN.

"So! you're old acquaintances, it seems!" observed Leicester, who had overheard the conversation following upon Lewis's introduction to Lord Bellefield. "Frere told me about the dog business, but I never knew till now that it had been Bellefield who offered you money for him. I can see you were annoyed about it. Belle fancies money can buy everything (which is pretty true in the long run), and a dog is a dog to him and nothing more. He'd never dream of making a friend of one; in fact, he votes friendship a bore altogether; so you must not heed his insult to Herr Faust. What are people going to do this afternoon? I wish somebody would settle something. Annie, just attend to me a minute, will you—what are we going to do?"

"Papa talked of a skating party on the lake," returned Annie, "but I've had no definite orders. Where can papa be? Do go and look for him, Charles."

"Is he in the house, think you?" inquired Charles, rising languidly and gazing round with a look of dreamy helplessness.

"I saw General Grant cross the lawn with a gentleman—Mr. De Grandeville, I believe—not five minutes since," observed Lewis.

"Exactly; then as you know where to find him, Arundel, and I don't, I dare say you'll be kind enough to tell him that—what was it, Annie?" said Leicester, reseating himself in an easy-chair with an expression of intense relief.

"Charley, how idle you are! I am quite ashamed of you," exclaimed Annie vehemently; then, turning to Lewis, she continued, "If you would be so kind, Mr. Arundel, as to ask papa whether the lake scheme holds good, and if we are to walk or drive there, I should be so much obliged to you."

Lewis signified his willingness to execute her wishes, and calling to Walter to accompany him, left the room.

"Well, Annie, how do you like Lewis Arundel by this time?" inquired her cousin. "Wasn't I right in telling you he was quite a catch?"

"Yes, indeed," returned Annie warmly; "and he is so kind and clever about that poor Walter, I don't know what we should do without him. I think it is quite delightful to see his manner towards him, poor boy! it combines all the tenderness of a woman with the firmness of a man, he is so patient and forbearing; but it must in some degree repay him for his trouble to see the improvement he has effected, and the strong affection he has inspired. Walter absolutely seems to dote upon him."

"A most desirable acquisition, certainly, the affection of an idiot," observed Lord Bellefield with a satirical curl of the lip.

"I never despise real affection of any kind," returned Annie quickly.

"I am delighted to hear you say so, *belle cousine*," replied Lord Bellefield, fixing his bold, roving eyes on her with an expression intended to be fascinating, but which was simply disagreeable.

Annie looked annoyed, and saying she must warn Miss Livingstone of the intended expedition, rose and quitted the apartment.

When the brothers were left together, Charles, after a minute's pause, began—"I say, Bellefield, I wish you'd try and be a little more civil to young Arundel. You annoyed him by the way in which you offered money for his dog, just after he had risked his life to save it, and I don't think you mended matters by what you added to-day. Recollect he's a gentleman by birth, and has the feelings of one."

"Curse his feelings!" was the unamiable rejoinder; "he's a proud, insolent young puppy. If he's a gentleman by birth, he's a beggar by position, and requires pulling down to his proper level. I've no notion of dependents giving themselves such airs, and shall let him know my opinion some of these days."

Charley Leicester regarded his elder brother with a half-sleepy look of serio-comic disgust, then slightly shrugging his shoulders, he drew on his glove, placed his hat on his head, arranged his curls to his satisfaction at a mirror, and lounged gracefully out of the room.

Scarcely had he done so when the late subject of their conversation entered by another door which opened into the conservatory, and glanced round the apartment as if in quest of some one. Apparently the object of his search was not to be discerned, for turning to Lord Bellefield, he inquired "whether he could direct him where to find Miss Grant?"

The person addressed favoured him for some seconds with a supercilious stare ere he answered, "And what might you want with that young lady, pray?"

Lewis paused for a moment before he dared trust himself to reply, for the tone in which the question had been asked was most insolent. At length he said, "I can have no objection to gratify your lordship's curiosity. The General wished me to inform Miss Grant that he had

arranged a skating party on the lake for this afternoon, and that carriages would be at the door in ten minutes to transport those of the company thither who might prefer driving to walking."

"Really, you must possess a wonderful memory, Mr. Arundel; I dare swear those were the General's very words. As, however, I can scarcely imagine it consistent with your onerous duties to play the part of squire to dames, I'll save you the trouble for once, by delivering your message myself." And with an irritating smile, as he remarked the anger his words had produced, Lord Bellefield turned and quitted the apartment.

Lewis stood for a moment gazing after the retreating figure, his chest heaving and his nostrils expanded, like those of some hunted animal; then pacing the room (his invariable custom when labouring under strong excitement), he gave vent to the following broken sentences:—

"He meant to insult me—his words, his look, everything proves it—and I did not resent it. Perhaps he thinks I fear him—if I believed so, I'd follow him, and before them all fix on him the blow of shame that he must avenge, or own himself a coward." As he spoke he took two or three hasty strides towards the door; checking himself, however, as his eye accidentally fell upon Walter, who had entered with him, and who stood regarding him with looks of stupid amazement, he continued: "But I must not think of myself only; the interests of others are at stake—Rose—my Mother—that poor boy—I dare not sacrifice them." He flung himself into a chair, and pressing his hand against his burning brow, resumed, "Oh, why am I called upon to bear this?—how have I sinned, that this degradation should be forced upon me?—the coward! he knows I am bound hand and foot, or he dare not thus insult me; it is like striking a fettered man—" He paused, then added, "Well, a time may come when I may meet him more as an equal; at all events, now it is my duty to bear as much as human nature can, and I'll do it." He remained silent for a few minutes, with his hand over his eyes, waiting till the excitement should pass away. From this state he was aroused by feeling something touch him, and looking up, he perceived the idiot, half kneeling, half sitting by his side, gazing up into his face with looks of wonder and sympathy. This mute evidence of affection acted as a balm to his wounded spirit, and laying his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder, he said, "Walter, my poor fellow, have I frightened you? I was not angry with *you*, you know. Come, we will walk down to the lake and see the skating. What has become of Faust, I wonder? We must take him with us, of course."

"Who was that who went away just now?" returned Walter. "He with the hair over his mouth, I mean?"

"That was Lord Bellefield, your friend Mr. Leicester's brother."

"He's a bad man, isn't he?"

"Why should you think so, Walter?"

The boy paused for a few moments in reflection, then answered, "His eyes look wicked and frighten me; besides, he made you angry—I hate him."

"You should not say that, Walter; you know it is not right to hate any one," returned Lewis, feeling dreadfully hypocritical; then linking his arm in that of his pupil, they passed out through the conservatory.

As the sound of their retreating footsteps died away a figure peeped timidly into the apartment, and seeing it was unattended, entered and gazed after them long and fixedly. It was Annie Grant, who, returning to learn the result of Lewis's embassy to her father, had involuntarily overheard both the insult and the burst of wounded feeling which it had called forth.

In that short five minutes were sown seeds that, as they grew to maturity, bore sleepless nights and weary days, and the tearless sorrow of a breaking heart, as a portion of their bitter fruit.

The lake in Broadhurst Park presented a gay scene on the afternoon in question. The General, anxious to propitiate the good-will of the voters, had ordered the park to be thrown open to all who might choose to witness or join in the amusement of skating. A sharp frost, which had continued without intermission for several days, had covered the water with a firm coating of ice, which afforded a surface as smooth as glass for the evolutions of the skaters. The sun was shining brightly, bringing out beautiful effects of light and shade on the steep and rugged banks, and causing the hoar-frost on the feathery branches of a young birch plantation to glitter like sprays of diamonds. On the side approached by the drive from the house a tent had been pitched, in such a direction that any of the party who feared to expose themselves to the cold might witness the performances of the skaters and yet be sheltered from the troublesome intrusion of the north wind.

As Lewis and Walter came in sight of the spot (on which several groups of well-dressed people, together with a considerable number of a lower class, were already assembled) the latter uttered an exclamation of delight, and roused out of his usual state of apathy by the novel excitement, bounded gaily forward till he reached the side of Charles Leicester, to whom he had taken an extreme fancy.

"Mr. Arundel is going to teach me how to skate, Mr. Leicester, and you are to help," he exclaimed, as soon as he had recovered breath after his run.

"Am I?" returned Leicester with a good-natured smile "How do you know that I will help you?"

"Because Mr. Arundel said so; and everybody minds him—Faust and all."

"Is that true, Arundel? Am I to do just as you tell me?" inquired Leicester, as the individual alluded to joined them.

"It is quite right that Walter should think so, at all events," returned Lewis; "but I told him to ask you, as a favour, whether you would lend us your assistance. Walter is anxious to learn to skate, and to save his cranium from getting a few artificial bumps suddenly developed upon it, I propose that you and I should each take one of his arms and keep him from falling, till he learns to stand safely upon his skates without assistance."

Leicester gave vent to a deep sigh of resignation, then muttered,

"Well, I should certainly never have dreamed of undergoing such an amount of exertion on my own account; but I suppose Walter fancies it will be very charming, and he has not a great many pleasures, poor fellow!" he continued aside. And so, like a good-natured, kind-hearted creature, as, despite his affectation, he really was, he performed the service required of him, and actually exerted himself till his complexion became, as he expressed it, "redder than that of some awful ploughboy." After a time Walter grew tired with the unaccustomed exercise, and taking off his skates, the trio proceeded to join the party at the tent. As they approached, Annie tripped up to Leicester, and seizing his arm, said, "Where have you been all this time? I wanted you particularly." She then added something in a low voice which had the effect of heightening her cousin's unromantic complexion to a still greater degree, and elicited from him the incredulous ejaculation, "Nonsense!"

"I knew you'd be surprised," returned Annie, laughing. "She is going to remain here till the party breaks up, so you'll have plenty of time to make yourself agreeable, if it's not 'too much trouble,' or 'such a bore,'" she continued, mimicking Charles's languid drawl.

"How was this matter brought about, pray?" inquired her cousin; "and why on earth do you fancy it concerns me in any way?"

"It was all my doing," returned Annie. "I was not blind when we were in Scotland; and after you left us I made a point of cultivating the young lady, and fortunately for you, approving of her, I asked papa to let me invite her to Broadhurst."

"Of course, with that discretion which is such a striking characteristic of your amiable sex, imparting to him all your views in doing so."

"Now, Charley, you are very cross and unkind and disagreeable. I asked her merely because I thought it would give you pleasure; and though I like sometimes to tease you a little myself, of course I never dreamed of saying anything to my father which could annoy you."

"Well, you are a dear, good little cousin, I know, so I won't scold you," was the reply, and they entered the tent together.

A few minutes afterwards Lewis was engaged in pointing out to Walter one of the skaters who was performing some very intricate figure with great success, when he heard a female voice exclaim, "Surely I am not mistaken—that is Mr. Arundel!" and turning at the sound, beheld, leaning on the arm of Charles Leicester, Miss Laura Peyton, the young lady who had penetrated his disguise at Lady Lombard's party. Not to return her bow was impossible; but at the recollection of all that had passed on that evening his cheek flushed and his features assumed a cold, haughty expression, the result of mingled pride and vexation, under which he strove to conceal his annoyance. Annie, who was not aware that Lewis and her friend had ever met before, glanced from one to the other with looks of the greatest astonishment, which was by no means diminished when Miss Peyton continued, "Now let me inquire after the Prince of Persia. I hope you left his Highness in the enjoyment of good health."

While Lewis was striving to frame a suitable reply, Annie, who could restrain herself no longer, exclaimed, in a tone of the utmost bewilderment, "The Prince of Persia! My dear Laura, are you out of your senses?"

The only reply her friend was able for some minutes to return was rendered inaudible by a fit of laughing, in which Leicester, and at last even Lewis himself, could not resist joining.

"Now I call that abominable," continued Annie; "you are all enjoying some excellent joke, and I am left to pine in ignorance. Laura, what *are* you laughing at?"

"Ask Mr. Leicester," returned Miss Peyton, breathless with laughter.

"Charles, what is it all about?"

"Ask Arundel," was the reply; "he is the proper person to explain."

"Mr. Arundel, you *must* tell me!"

"Really, I must beg you to excuse me," began Lewis. "Miss Peyton—that is—Mr. Leicester—in fact, it is utterly impossible for me to tell you. Come, Walter, you've rested quite long enough, you'll catch cold sitting still, after making yourself so hot;" and as he spoke he took his pupil's arm and hastily quitted the tent.

Of course as soon as he was out of earshot, Annie reiterated her demand that the mystery should be explained, and of course Laura begged Charles to relate the affair, and then, woman-like, interrupted him before he had uttered half-a-dozen words, and being once fairly off, did not stop till she had told the whole history from beginning to end, which she did with much spirit and drollery; then, in her turn, she had to be informed of the position Lewis held in the General's family; how wonderfully Walter had improved under his care, and how much everybody liked him. When they had fully discussed these matters, they were joined by Lord Bellefield, who escorted them across the ice to witness more closely the proceedings of the skaters.

Later in the afternoon a party of young men had undertaken to skate a quadrille. This being something new, people hurried from all sides to witness the performance, and a crowd speedily collected. Walter had expressed a wish to see it, and Lewis, pleased at the unusual interest he took in all that was going forward, which he rightly regarded as a proof of the decided progress his intellect was making, willingly complied.

The crowd still continued to thicken as the quadrille proceeded, and it had just occurred to Lewis that the weight of so many people collected in one spot would try the strength of the ice pretty severely, when a slight cracking sound confirmed his suspicions, and induced him to withdraw Walter from the group. It was fortunate that he did so, for scarcely were they clear of the crowd when a sharp crack, like the report of a pistol, rang in his ears, followed in rapid succession by one or two similar explosions. Then came a rush of many feet, accompanied by the shrill screaming of women, and on looking round Lewis perceived that a portion of the ice had given way, and that several persons were struggling in the water.

CHAPTER XXI.

FAUST GETS ON SWIMMINGLY, AND THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO A DIVING BELLE "WRINGING" WET.

THE shrieks alluded to in the last chapter still continued, and Lewis, consigning Walter to the care of a servant, hastened to the spot to render any assistance which it might be in his power to afford. As he reached the scene of action the panic and confusion were so great that it was no easy matter to ascertain the extent of the mischief, or to perceive how best it might be remedied. Lord Bellefield, who seemed the only person at all collected, was issuing directions in a loud, authoritative voice, to which the majority of the bystanders appeared too much alarmed and excited to pay attention. The number of persons who were actually immersed had been increased by the injudicious attempts of those who had first endeavoured to assist them by rushing to the edge of the broken ice, which, giving way under their weight, had plunged them also into the water. As Lewis came up a rope was flung across the opening, and held tightly by men on either side. Grasping this firmly with one hand, the young tutor assisted to extricate several persons who were clinging to the edges of the ice. He was just springing back as the portion on which he was standing broke away beneath his feet, when a cry was raised, "There's a lady in the water!" and immediately some one added, "It's the General's daughter—it's Miss Grant." Before the words were well spoken Lewis had flung off his greatcoat and was about to plunge into the water, when his eye suddenly caught that of Lord Bellefield, who, having in the confusion accidentally stationed himself by his side, was pointing with vehement gestures to the spot where, partly sustained by the buoyant nature of her dress, partly supported by a mass of floating ice, the form of Annie Grant was to be discerned. At the sight of the eager face of the man who had insulted him some evil spirit seemed to take possession of Lewis's breast; checking himself suddenly, he stepped back a pace, and fixing his eyes with a piercing glance on Lord Bellefield's features, said coldly, "I beg pardon, your lordship will, of course, rescue Miss Grant."

For a moment anger and surprise deprived Lord Bellefield of the power of speaking, but as soon as he could find words he replied, "Go on, sir; as you could risk your life for a dog, you will surely take a cold bath to save your master's daughter."

The speech was an ill-chosen one, for it excited a degree of irritation which outweighed all other considerations, and folding his arms across his chest, Lewis replied in a tone of the bitterest irony, "Your lordship must excuse me. *I am no squire of dames.*"

Lord Bellefield's only rejoinder was an oath, and flinging off his wrapper, he appeared about to spring into the water. Suddenly changing his intention, he turned to Lewis and exclaimed, his face livid with rage and vexation, "Ten thousand curses on you! You know I cannot swim."

It is at such moments as these, when by our own wilful act we have laid ourselves open to his attacks, that the tempter urges us on to crimes which in our calmer moments we should shudder to contemplate. A glance of triumph shot from Lewis's dark eyes; the fearful thought flashed across him, "She is to be his bride—her fortune is to repair his extravagance—perhaps he loves her—let him save her himself, I will not rescue her *for him*." And the fiend prompted the idea, worthy of its originator, that he might revenge himself on Lord Bellefield by leaving Annie to perish. But, like many other clever people, for once the demon outwitted himself, the very magnitude of the offence serving to awaken Lewis to the sinfulness of the line of conduct he had meditated. Almost in the same moment in which the idea occurred to him a mist seemed to clear itself away from his mental vision, and he perceived the abyss of guilt on the brink of which he was standing. And now the agonising doubt suggested itself to him whether his repentance might not have come too late—whether Annie might not sink before he could reach her; and as Lord Bellefield ran off impetuously to hasten the movements of a party who were bringing a small flat-bottomed boat towards the spot, Lewis sprang into the water, clearing a quarter of the distance in his leap, and swam with vigorous strokes in the direction of the still floating figure.

His fears were not unfounded. Annie's dress, which had hitherto served in great measure to sustain her, was rapidly becoming saturated with water; every instant she sank lower, and while he was still some yards from the spot, to his horror he perceived the fragment of ice on which she rested roll round and slip from her grasp. The effect was instantaneous. Uttering a piercing shriek, which rang through his ears like a death-knell, she threw out her arms in a vain attempt to save herself, and disappeared beneath the water. At the same moment there was a rush, a bound, a plunge—some large animal dashed past Lewis, and ere the last fragment of Annie's dress disappeared Faust had seized it in his mouth and prevented its wearer from sinking. The bystanders now drew the rope which had been flung across the opening in the ice in such a direction that Lewis could grasp it, and thus supported, he contrived to raise Annie's head above the water, and with some assistance from Faust, to keep both her and himself afloat till such time as the punt should arrive. This, fortunately, was not long. The instant it was launched, Lord Bellefield and one or two others jumped into it, and in another moment Annie Grant was rescued from her perilous situation, to the horrors of which she was, however, by this time happily insensible. As they were lifting her into the boat, poor Faust, who probably did not understand that his services were no longer needed, still retained his hold on her dress, and Lord Bellefield struck him so fiercely with the handle of a boat-hook that he fell back stunned, and would have sunk had not Lewis, who was still in the water, thrown his arm round him and supported him.

"The punt can hold no more," exclaimed Lord Bellefield. "Miss Grant's safety must not be endangered for *any* consideration;" and as

he spoke he pushed the boat from the spot, leaving Lewis still clinging to the rope and supporting the weight of the dog, which did not as yet begin to show any signs of life.

"We will bring the boat back for you, sir, directly," cried one of the men who were assisting Lord Bellefield in punting.

"You must be quick about it, if you care to be of any use," returned Lewis in a faint voice, "for I can't hold on much longer; my limbs are becoming numbed with the cold."

"Better let go the dog if you're in any difficulty," suggested Lord Bellefield with a malicious laugh as the boat moved rapidly away.

"That is the way they would repay your faithful service, eh! my poor Faust," murmured Lewis. "Never fear, we'll sink or swim together, my dog. If any one deserves to drown for this day's work 'tis I, not you." At the sound of his master's voice the poor animal opened his eyes and began to show signs of returning animation. Fortunate was it for them both that Lewis had contrived to place the rope under his arms in such a position as almost entirely to support, not only his own weight, but that of the dog also; for long before the boat returned his strength was entirely exhausted, and his limbs, from the length of time he had been immersed in the icy water, had completely lost all sensation, and were powerless as those of a child.

Lord Bellefield contrived to detain the boat on various pretexts, till at last the man who had promised to return lost all patience, and pushed off without waiting for permission; in another moment it was by Lewis's side.

"Take the dog first," exclaimed Lewis in a voice scarcely audible from exhaustion. "Now, you must lift me in, for I can't help myself."

With some difficulty (for even with the assistance of the rope Lewis had been barely able to keep his own head and that of Faust above water) the men in the boat complied with his directions. The dog had by this time nearly recovered from the effects of the blow, and was able to stand up and lick his master's face and hands as he lay at the bottom of the punt. Lewis, however, by no means appeared in such good case; his cheeks and even lips were deadly pale, his breathing was hard and laborious, and he lay with his eyes closed and his limbs stretched out with unnatural stiffness and rigidity. As the boat approached the spot where a landing was practicable, Charles Leicester, who had assisted his brother in conveying Annie to the carriage, which was fortunately in waiting, came running back, and as his eye fell upon the prostrate form of Lewis, he exclaimed—

"Why, Arundel! good heavens, I believe he's insensible."

Nor was he wrong. The instant the necessity for exertion was over the reaction had been too much for Lewis, and he had fainted. He was instantly lifted from the boat and carried to the tent, where such restoratives as could be at the moment procured were applied, at first without success, but after a short time the colour began to return to his lips, and in a few minutes more he was restored to consciousness.

"Bravo, that's all right," began Charley Leicester, as Lewis, with a faint smile, sat upright and returned his hearty shake of the hand with a feeble pressure. "You begin to look a little less like a candidate

for a coffin than you did five minutes ago. I declare, when I saw you in the boat, I thought it was a case of 'found drowned.' Faust! good dog, how unpleasantly wet you are—what a bump he's got on the top of his head, just where the organ of combativeness—no, veneration, isn't it? ought to be. How did that happen? In fact I'm quite in the dark as to the whole affair, for I had gone to fetch shawls for some of the ladies, and when I reached the scene of action Bellefield was fishing his intended, half-drowned, out of a moist punt, and enlisted me to assist in conveying the dripping damsel to the carriage. Did you fall in together?"

"You will hear enough about it soon, I dare say," returned Lewis, speaking feebly and with apparent difficulty. "I am afraid I have scarcely sufficient life left in me just now to tell you."

"Don't attempt it," returned Leicester good-naturedly. "And the sooner you get those soaked clothes off, the better. Of course they will send back the trap for you."

"My carriage is on the spot," interrupted a tall, aristocratic-looking man who had assisted in conveying Lewis to the tent. "My carriage is on the spot, and is very much at this gentleman's service. We must all feel anxious to prevent his suffering from the effects of his gallant conduct. The preserver of Miss Grant's life must be considered as a public benefactor."

At this praise a slight colour rose to Lewis's pale cheeks, and a look of pain passed across his features. *He* to be styled Annie's preserver! —*he* who had all but sacrificed her life to his feelings of revenge! and as the recollection occurred to him a slight shudder ran through his frame.

"There, you are actually shivering," exclaimed Leicester. "I shall not let you stay here any longer. Since Sir Ralph Strickland is so kind as to offer his carriage, there is nothing to delay us. Can you walk? Take my arm."

Lewis, with an inclination of the head to Sir Ralph, took Leicester's proffered arm, and having with difficulty risen from his seat, attempted to walk, but at the first step he stumbled, and would have fallen had not his friend supported him.

"Steady, there," continued Leicester; "you're hardly in marching order yet. Would you like to wait another minute or two?"

"I think I had better try to proceed," replied Lewis; "exercise may serve to restore the circulation."

"Allow me to take your other arm," said Sir Ralph Strickland kindly; "then I think you will be able to reach the carriage—it is close at hand. The length of time you were in the water has cramped your limbs. I saw the whole affair, and never witnessed anything more interesting than the conduct of your noble dog."

And as he spoke he stooped and patted Faust, then forcing Lewis to accept his offer of assistance, they left the tent together. As his blood began once again to circulate the cramp and stiffness gradually disappeared, and ere the trio reached the carriage Lewis scarcely required assistance. On reaching Broadhurst he found the General waiting to receive him, and the instant he alighted he had to

undergo a long, prosy, and pompous harangue, embodying that noble commander's gratitude, during the delivery of which oration the subject of it was kept standing in his wet clothes, a compulsory act of homage to the cold-water system, by no means congenial to his feelings, mental or bodily. However, it came to an end at last, and Lewis was permitted to retire to his own room. Moreover, Charles Leicester (instigated thereunto by a hint from Miss Peyton) waylaid the apothecary who had been summoned on Annie's account, and caused him to inspect Lewis's condition, which measure resulted in a command to have his bed warmed, and instantly to deposit himself therein; with which medical ordinance Lewis was fain to comply.

There he lay until, from being much too cold, he became a great deal too hot, for before night he was in a high state of feverish excitement, accompanied by violent pains in the head and limbs. His medical adviser was, however, fortunately really skilful, and by vigorous and timely measures he contrived to avert the rheumatic fever with which his patient was threatened; and after spending three days in bed Lewis arose, feeling indeed especially weak, but otherwise little the worse in body for his aquatic exploit. We say in body, for mentally he had suffered, and was still suffering bitterly. As he lay on the couch of sickness in the silent hours of the night, face to face with conscience, the recollection of the sin he had committed (for a sin it was, and he was too honest-hearted in his self-scrutiny not to recognise it as such) haunted him. The fact that he had been unable by his own act to repair the consequences of the evil he had meditated impressed him deeply—but for Faust Annie would have sunk ere he could have reached the spot, probably to rise no more. It appeared a special interference of Providence to convince him of the folly of self-reliance, and to impress upon his mind a sense of the mercy of God, in saving him from the consequences of his revengeful feelings. True, he had repented of his fault almost in the moment of committal; true, he had risked his life in proof of the sincerity of his repentance; true, the provocation he had received might, in the eyes of men, serve in great measure to justify him; still, the knowledge that but for the interposition of Providence he might now have felt himself a murderer filled him with emotions of the deepest penitence, and at the same time of the liveliest gratitude.

In this frame of mind the encomiums passed upon his gallant conduct were most distressing to him, and a short note from Annie, thanking him in a few simple words for having saved her life, added fuel to the fire of his self-condemnation. Amongst other good resolutions for the future he determined to bear any insults Lord Bellefield might offer with as much patient endurance as could by any possibility be consistent with self-respect in one in his dependent situation; and the reader may judge of the sincerity of his repentance if he reflects what such a resolution must have cost his haughty nature. He also determined to seek an opportunity of confessing to Annie how little he deserved her gratitude, and to implore her forgiveness

for the wrong he had intended her. The dipping that young lady had undergone did not appear to have affected either her health or her spirits. By the doctor's orders she also had been sent to bed immediately on her return home, where, falling asleep, she escaped a lecture from Minerva and all other evil consequences of her immersion, and woke the next morning none the worse for the accident.

It was about a week after the day on which these events had taken place, when, the afternoon being fine, Lewis and Walter proposed to take a ride together. Walter had mounted his pony, and Lewis was strapping a greatcoat in front of his horse's saddle, when Richards, the groom, who had been elevated to the rank of second coachman (as the illness of the head coachman had rendered his resignation an act of necessity, and the next in command had succeeded to his vacant box), came forward, and touching his hat, asked if he could speak to Lewis a minute.

"Certainly; what is it?" returned Lewis, stepping aside a few paces.

"Why, sir, p'raps you know as the General's gone out a-driving?"

"I was not aware of the fact," returned Lewis; "but what then?"

"He's a-driving of hisself, sir,—*our* iron-greys, Mr. Arundel. Master ain't so young as he used to was, and it's my belief if anythink startles 'em he won't be able to hold 'em—they go sweetly now, but they do pull most amazing. I drove 'em yesterday, and afore I got home my arms ached properly."

"Did you mention this to General Grant?" inquired Lewis.

"Well, I told him I was afeard he'd find 'em pull rather stiff; but he only give me one of his dark looks, as much as to say, 'Keep your advice to yourself, and mind your own business.' Master's rather a hard gentleman to talk to, you see; he's always been used to shooting and flogging the blacks, out in the Ingies, till it's kind a-become natural to him; and *as* he can't act the same here with us whites, why it puts him out like."

"I do not see that anything can be done now," observed Lewis, after a moment's reflection. "If I had been here when the General started I would have told him the trick the iron-greys played us, and advised him not to drive them just yet; but I dare say it would have done no good; for, as you say, your master is not over fond of advice gratis. I suppose he has one of the grooms with him?"

"Only a mere boy, sir, and Miss Annie," was the reply.

"What!" exclaimed Lewis in a quick, excited tone of voice; "is Miss Grant with him? Why did you not say so before? Which road have they taken? How long have they been gone?"

"About twenty minutes, or p'raps not so long," returned Richards. "I think they're gone to Camfield—leastways, I heard master tell Miss Annie to bring her card-case, 'cos he was going to call on Colonel Norton."

"That must be eight miles by the road, but not much above five across the fields by Churton Wood," rejoined Lewis.

"That *is* right, Mr. Arundel," was the reply; "and the gates is unlocked, for I rode that way v.ith a note for Colonel Norton the day afore yesterday."

Ere Richards had finished speaking Lewis was on horseback; and as soon as they reached the park he turned to his pupil, saying, "Now, Walter, sit firmly, guide the pony on to the turf, tighten your reins, and then for a good canter; touch him with the whip—not too hard—that's it." Putting his own horse in motion at the same time, they rode forward at a brisk canter, which, as the horses grew excited by the rapid motion, became almost a gallop. Crossing the park at this pace, they turned down a bridle-path which led through a wood and across several grass fields, beyond the last of which lay a wide common. As they approached this Lewis took out his watch. "Above four miles in twenty minutes,—I call that good work for a pony. You rode very well, Walter,—you've a capital seat on horseback now."

"I can leap too," rejoined Walter. "Richards taught me the days when you were ill in bed."

"I'm glad to hear it," returned Lewis, who, while his pupil was speaking, had been endeavouring, unsuccessfully, to open a gate, "for they have fastened this gate with a padlock, and we must find our way over the hedge."

"Oh! but I can't—!" began Walter.

"Yes you can," interposed Lewis, "when I have cleared the road for you, and shown you how to do it. Sit still and watch me." So saying, he selected a place where the hedge was thin and the ditch and bank practicable, and putting his horse into an easy canter, rode at it. Being particularly anxious that nothing should go wrong, and that Walter should be convinced of the feasibility of the attempt, Lewis was not best pleased when his horse, instead of rising to the leap, refused it, and replied to a tolerably sharp application of the spur by plunging violently and turning short round. His rider, however, sat as firmly as if he were part of the animal, and cantering round two sides of the field, got him well in hand and again rode him at the hedge, working his mouth with the bit and giving him the spur. This discipline produced the desired effect; for instead of refusing the leap this time, the horse sprang forward with a bound which would have cleared an obstacle of twice the size, and alighted on the other side several feet beyond the ditch. Lewis rode on a few yards, and then turning, leaped back into the field and rejoined his pupil. "Now, Walter, you must do as I have done. Canter up to that gap, give the pony his head, touch him on the flank as he approaches the hedge, sit firmly and press in your knees, and you'll go over as nicely as possible."

But poor Walter's courage failed him; the conflict between Lewis and his horse had destroyed his confidence, and he was afraid to make the attempt. His tutor read it in his blanched cheek and quailing glance, and being as kind and judicious as he was firm, forbore to press the point, and dismounting, led the pony through the gap, and assisted Walter to scramble over on foot; then remounting his steed, he tested his obedience by once more leaping him over; and having thus achieved the adventure of the locked gate, tutor and pupil cantered off across the common. But this little episode had caused some

loss of time, and when Lewis reached the lane leading to the village, near which Colonel Norton's house was situated, he learned from a man who was mending the road that a phaeton, answering the description of General Grant's equipage, had passed a few minutes before.

"My friend Richards' fears were needlessly excited then, it seems, and the old gentleman is a better whip than he gave him credit for being," thought Lewis. "Come, Walter," he added aloud, "we will go back by the road. Don't trot just yet; the horses are warm, we must allow them to get a little cool."

After proceeding about half a mile along the lane, which was only just wide enough to allow vehicles to pass each other, they overtook an elderly woman in a red cloak most picturesquely perched between two panniers on a donkey's back. Such an arrangement being a novelty to Walter, he was proceeding to inquire of what use the panniers were, when Lewis's quick sense of hearing caught a sound which caused him to rein in his horse and, enjoining silence, pause to listen. His ears had not deceived him. Owing to the frosty weather the road was particularly hard, the ruts also had been lately mended with coarse gravel, and as he listened the sound of horses' feet galloping, and the rattle of a carriage proceeding at unusual speed, became distinctly audible in the lane behind them. The vehicle was evidently rapidly approaching. The lane being in this part extremely narrow, Lewis's first thought was for Walter's safety. Seizing the pony's rein, he set spurs to his horse, and they cantered on a short distance till they reached a gateway leading into a field. The gate was fortunately open, and desiring Walter to ride into the field and wait till he joined him, he turned his horse's head and began to retrace his steps. As soon as he had passed an old oak-tree which stood at a corner of the road and prevented any one from seeing beyond it, he perceived the cause of the sounds which had reached him, and which he had already but too correctly divined.

At about a hundred yards from the spot where he was stationed appeared a phaeton drawn by a pair of magnificent iron-grey horses, which Lewis had no difficulty in recognising. From the furious pace at which they were advancing, it was evident that their driver had lost all control over them; while about half-way between Lewis and the equipage in question were the donkey and panniers, with the old woman in the red cloak before alluded to. The gentleman driving the phaeton shouted to her to get out of the way, and Lewis made signs as to which side of the road she had better take; but she appeared either paralysed with fear or unable to guide her donkey; and ere she was able to comply with, or probably to comprehend these directions, the infuriated horses had overtaken her, and dashing against her, flung her, donkey, panniers and all, to the ground with a shock like that of a battering-ram. At the same instant Lewis, availing himself of the temporary check, rode forward, and springing from his saddle, seized the heads of the phaeton horses, and with much difficulty, and no inconsiderable personal risk, succeeded in stopping them.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRAIN ARRIVES AT AN IMPORTANT STATION.

THE catastrophe related at the end of the last chapter attracted the attention of a couple of labourers who had been engaged in mending the road, and they immediately hastened to the spot to render any assistance which might be required. By their aid the poor woman was extricated from her perilous situation, and fortunately proved to be less injured than could have been expected, a dislocated shoulder being the most serious hurt she had sustained. Committing the phaeton and horses to the care of one of the working men, Lewis and the other labourer carried the poor woman to a cottage by the roadside, and deposited her on a bed till such time as the surgeon (for whom General Grant had, by his daughter's suggestion, despatched the groom on the horse which Lewis had ridden) should arrive. Luckily, they had not long to wait, as the boy met the person he was in search of returning from his round of professional visits. The dislocated shoulder was soon set to rights and bandaged up, and the sight of Annie's well-filled purse rendered easy an arrangement with the tenants of the cottage to allow the invalid to continue their inmate till the next day, when she could be removed without detriment.

In the meantime the General had drawn Lewis on one side, and was expatiating to him upon the cause of the accident. "You perceive, Mr. Arundel, that my wrist is slightly swollen? Well, sir, that is from an old strain received in the little affair at Sticumlykphun. I was only a captain then. The company to which I belonged got separated from the regiment in crossing a jungle, and a party of the Rajah's irregular horse tried to cut us off; they were upon us so suddenly, we hadn't time to form a hollow square, and for a minute our fate appeared sealed;—they rode the men down like sheep. In the *mélée* a gigantic trooper cut down the colour-sergeant and was about to possess himself of the flag, when I seized the staff with my left hand and struck at him with my sabre, but, unfortunately, it broke on his cuirass; his sword had also snapped with the blow which had caused the sergeant's death, and a struggle ensued between us for the possession of the colours. His strength was in proportion to his height, but although I felt as if every muscle in my arms was about to snap, I held on till one of my men shot him through the head. At the same moment a troop of the 14th Lancers rode up and rescued us—but my wrists have never recovered the strain. However, I found little difficulty in holding in these horses, till, just now, when we had turned to come home, some boys overthrew a barrow full of stones by the roadside, which startled the animals; they broke into a gallop, and despite all my efforts to prevent it, the accident to which you were witness occurred."

"Had I known of your intention, sir, I should have cautioned you not to trust them too implicitly," replied Lewis. "Before your return,—by Miss Livingstone's wish,—I went over the stables to ascertain whether there were any carriage horses she could use. I drove these

greys the second or third time they had ever been in harness, and they ran away with me in Broadhurst Park; but I have taken them out several times since, when Walter wished for an airing, and I believed they had become quiet."

"Indeed," returned the General, more graciously than was his wont, "I was not aware you were so good a whip; that relieves me from a great difficulty; you will be so obliging as to drive the phaeton home, and I can ride your horse. With my wrists in their present condition it would be a great risk for me to attempt to hold in those animals, and the groom is a mere boy. Annie, my dear," he continued, as his daughter approached them from the cottage, "our difficulties are at an end. Mr. Arundel, it appears, has been in the habit of driving these horses lately, and will be so good as to take my place and see you safely home."

"But, papa——" began Annie in a tone of remonstrance, while a slight accession of colour replaced the roses which fear had banished from her cheeks.

"My dear, the arrangement is the only one which appears feasible under present circumstances. I shall ride Mr. Arundel's horse and will keep near, so you need be under no alarm," returned her father majestically.

Annie by no means approved of the plan. In the first place, she was a good deal afraid of the horses, and having no experience of Lewis's skill as a driver, was naturally alarmed at trusting herself again behind them. In the second place, she had a vague idea that it was scarcely etiquette to take a *tête-à-tête* drive with the handsome young tutor. But she saw that her father was quite determined, so, like a sensible girl, she refrained from offering opposition which she foresaw would be useless.

Lewis, however, reading in that "book of beauty," her expressive face, the secret of her fears, took an opportunity, while the General was altering the stirrups to suit himself, to reassure her by saying, "You need not be in the least afraid, Miss Grant. Believe me, I would not undertake so great a trust as that of your safety did I not feel perfectly sure that I could drive you home without the slightest danger."

As Lewis spoke Annie raised her eyes and glanced at him for a moment. It has been already remarked, in the course of this veracious history, that when Lewis smiled, the nameless charm which in Rose Arundel's face won the love of all who knew her shed its lustre over his handsome features. To analyse such an expression of countenance is scarcely possible, but perhaps the nearest approach to a correct description of it would be to say that it was a bright, sunshiny look which inspired others with a conviction of its wearer's kindness of heart and honest truthfulness of purpose. Such was its effect in the present instance, and when her father handed her to her seat in the phaeton the uneasiness which had arisen from a want of confidence in her driver had in great measure disappeared. Lewis waited, with the reins in his hand, till the General had mounted and ridden off with Walter, who acquiesced silently in the change of com-

panion, then springing lightly to his place, he desired the man at the horses' heads to stand aside, and drove off. The iron-greys soon found out the difference between their late conductor and their present one, and after one or two slight attempts to gain their own way gave up the point and settled down into a quiet, steady trot. Annie, whose alarm had quickened her perceptions on the subject, was not long in remarking the change, and turning to her companion, observed, "How do you contrive to make the horses go so quietly, Mr. Arundel? When papa was driving them they did nothing but dance and caper the whole way, and at last, as you are aware, ran away with us."

Lewis, who considered that the present was a favourable opportunity, which might never occur again, to unburden his mind in regard to the skating affair, and was debating with himself how he might best introduce the subject, heard her question mechanically, as it were, without its reaching the ears of his understanding, and it was not until he observed her look of surprise at receiving no answer to her query that he hastened to reply, "I beg your pardon, Miss Grant, I was thinking on quite a different subject. I have lived such a hermit's life of late with poor Walter that I fear I have become dreadfully absent."

"I merely asked by what charm you had contrived to tame these fiery steeds," returned Annie, smiling at his evident bewilderment.

"The charm of a steady hand and a strong arm," replied Lewis. "But these horses and I are old acquaintances; we had a struggle once for the mastery, and I conquered, which they have not forgotten." He then gave her a short account of the runaway scene in Broadhurst Park, to which she listened with much interest. When he had concluded, Annie remarked, "How dreadful it must have been when they were rushing towards the lake, and you felt uncertain whether you might be able to check their wild career! That lake seems destined to become the scene of dangerous adventures. I must take this opportunity," she continued with a faint blush, "of thanking you for saving my life. In the few hurried lines I wrote you, I am afraid I scarcely made you understand how much I—in fact, that I am not ungrateful."

It was now Lewis's turn to feel embarrassed. The moment he had sought for was arrived. He must confess that which would turn his companion's gratitude into aversion; he must forfeit her good opinion irretrievably, and probably for this very reason (so perverse is human nature), he, for the first time, discovered that he valued it highly. Annie was the only member of the family (with the exception, perhaps, of Charles Leicester) who had never caused him to feel painfully his dependent situation; and it had not escaped his notice how on several occasions she had interfered to save him from some trifling annoyance, which her woman's tact led her to feel would be doubly mortifying to his proud and sensitive nature. Still he had resolved to make the confession, and with him to resolve and to do were one and the same thing. Another difficulty which rendered his task more embarrassing was that, in order to make his explanation intelligible,

he must revert to Lord Bellefield's insult, and though at that moment nothing would have given him greater satisfaction than to bestow on that unworthy scion of nobility a sound horse-whipping, he shrank from the idea of being supposed capable of the littleness of revenging himself by injuring his enemy in the affections of his betrothed. Thinking, however, was useless; the more he reflected the more embarrassed did he become, so he plunged at once *in media res* by exclaiming, "You cannot be aware, Miss Grant, of the pain your words give me. Far from deserving your gratitude, I must implore your pardon for having nearly sacrificed your life to my unfortunately warm temper and revengeful feelings; nor shall I again enjoy peace of mind till I have obtained your forgiveness, should I indeed be fortunate enough to succeed in doing so."

At this singular address Annie opened her large eyes and regarded her companion with unmixed astonishment, feeling by no means satisfied that he had not suddenly taken leave of his senses; not heeding her surprise, however, Lewis continued: "In order to make my tale intelligible, I must revert to an occurrence which I would rather, for many reasons, have left unmentioned; but you will, I hope, do me the justice to believe that I am actuated by no unworthy motive in alluding to it. About a year ago my favourite dog became entangled whilst swimming in the Serpentine river, and would have been drowned if I had not jumped in and saved him."

"I know, I saw it all; we were driving in the park at the time," interrupted Annie eagerly.

"As I regained the bank," resumed Lewis, "a gentleman, whom I have since learned to be your cousin, Lord Bellefield, came up and offered me a sum of money for the dog. I had not accomplished Faust's rescue without some risk, for though I am a good swimmer, my wet clothes kept dragging me down, and I confess the offer of money for an animal I had just imperilled my life to save irritated me, and I returned Lord Bellefield an answer which perhaps he was justified in considering impertinent. When Mr. Leicester introduced me to his brother, on the day of the skating-party, it was evident he had not forgotten this transaction, and he soon found an opportunity to address me in a style which could only have been applied to a dependent with safety."

As he spoke these words in a tone of bitter contempt, his eyes flashing and his cheeks burning, his companion murmured as though she were thinking aloud, "It was ungenerous of him, in the extreme." Lewis remained silent for a moment, and then continued in a calmer voice: "I am by nature of a lamentably hasty temper, and my impulse would have led me to resent Lord Bellefield's insult on the spot; but many considerations withheld me, and still possessed by angry feeling, I joined the party on the lake. After the ice had given way, while I was assisting those who clung to the edges to scramble out, I first became aware that you were in the water, and I was about to jump in and swim to your assistance when, by some ill luck, your cousin approached in a state of great excitement and ordered me authoritatively to 'save my master's daughter.'"

"Oh, how could he say such a thing!" exclaimed Annie indignantly.

"As he spoke," resumed Lewis, "some evil spirit seemed to take possession of me, and, to annoy him, I bowed and drew back, saying, 'Your lordship must excuse me—I am no squire of dames;' adding that of course he would rescue you himself. From the irritation produced by my reply I discovered that his lordship was unable to swim, and having reason to suppose your safety was especially important to him, the fiendish idea crossed my mind that by leaving you to perish I could revenge myself on him more effectually than by any other means."

"How could you be so unjust, so cruel, even in idea?" interrupted Annie reproachfully,—“I, who have never injured you in thought, word, or deed; but you were maddened at the time, and knew not what you did.”

"I must indeed have been mad," exclaimed Lewis, completely overcome by the kindness of these last words, "when I could even for a moment forget the gentle courtesy with which you have always treated me—the consideration—the——" He paused abruptly and pressed his hand to his forehead as if to shut out some hateful vision, a relaxation of vigilance of which the near-side horse took advantage to shy at its own shadow and break into a canter, which manœuvre restored Lewis's self-possession in an instant, the rein was again tightened, and the culprit admonished, by a sharp stroke of the whip, that he was not to indulge in such caprices for the future, ere his driver resumed: "I had scarcely formed the idea you so justly stigmatise as cruel, when the atrocity of the act flashed across me, and as Lord Bellefield ran off to procure a boat, I sprang into the water and swam towards you. Imagine then the agony of mind with which I perceived that you would sink before I could reach you! At that moment I felt what it was to be a murderer! The rest of the tale you have no doubt heard from others—how it pleased the Almighty to permit the instinct of my noble dog to become the instrument by which you were saved from death, and I from a life of remorse, to which death itself would have been preferable. Of this you are already aware; it only remains for me to add that if the deepest self-abhorrence, the most sincere repentance for the past may weigh with you, you will forgive me the wrong I meditated." At this moment the sound of horses' feet cantering gave notice that General Grant was about to effect a junction with the main body, and Annie replied hastily, "As far as I have anything to forgive, Mr. Arundel, I do so most heartily. If for a moment you thought of allowing my life to be sacrificed, you risked your own to save it immediately afterwards, so that I remain your debtor, even putting to-day's adventure out of the account—for I fully believe papa and I were in a fair way to break our necks, though he would not allow it."

"Well, Annie," remarked the General, riding up to his daughter's side, "you don't appear to be frightened now."

"No, papa," was the reply, "there is nothing to be alarmed at; the horses go as quietly as possible."

"Ah! I thought I had pretty well tamed them," returned the General triumphantly. "You scarcely find them at all difficult to restrain now, Mr. Arundel, I presume."

"They do pull a little strongly even yet, sir," returned Lewis quietly; "that glove was whole when I took the reins." As he spoke he held up his left hand and disclosed two large rents caused by the friction.

"Hum!" replied the General, slightly disconcerted. "Well, you have driven them very steadily; don't hurry them, take them in cool. Walter and I will precede you and explain how this adventure came about." So saying he gave his horse the rein, and he and Walter cantered on.

"Lord Bellefield has behaved abominably," observed Annie abruptly, after they had proceeded for some distance in silence; "he ought to apologise to you, and I have a great mind to make him do so."

"Do not think of such a thing," returned Lewis hastily. "If I can read his character, Lord Bellefield is a very proud man, and to one whom he considers his inferior he could not bring himself to apologise; nor, on calmly reviewing my own conduct, can I entirely acquit myself of having given him cause of offence. In my manner towards him I have shown too plainly my forgetfulness of our difference of station. Feeling that the son of one who was a soldier, a man of old family, and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, is any man's equal, I overlooked the distinction between the heir to a peerage and a poor tutor, and I treated Lord Bellefield, as I would any other man whose manner displeased me, cavalierly, without considering, or indeed caring, in what light my conduct might appear to him. This error I am resolved to avoid for the future, and if he will on his part forbear further insult, it is all I desire. Believe me," added Lewis in a tone which carried conviction with it, "I do not undervalue your kindness in advocating my cause, but I would not have you suffer further annoyance on my account; so if you have really forgiven me, you will best show it by forgetting the whole matter as speedily as possible."

Annie shook her head as though she considered such a termination to the affair highly improbable, merely replying, "Perhaps you are right in thinking I should do more harm than good by my interference; at all events, I will be guided in the matter by your wishes. And now, Mr. Arundel," she continued, "let me say what I have often wished, but have never been able to find an opportunity to tell you before, and that is, that as long as you are with us—not that I mean to limit it only to that time—I hope you will regard me as a friend. I have heard from my cousin Charles an outline of the circumstances through which my father was fortunate enough to secure your valuable assistance for poor Walter, and I can well conceive how greatly you must feel the loss of the society of your mother and sister."

"I know not how to thank you for such unexampled kindness; you are indeed returning good for evil," replied Lewis warmly. He paused for a moment, as if he were considering how best he might express his

meaning, then added, "As far as may be, I shall most gladly avail myself of the privilege of your friendship. I cannot tell you the weight you have taken off my mind by this convincing proof of your forgiveness. You may imagine how exquisitely painful, knowing how little I deserved them, were all the civil speeches people considered it necessary to make me on my 'gallant conduct,' as they termed it; as if there were anything wonderful in swimming a few yards to save a life!—the wonder would be for any man who could swim *not* to do so."

"And yet, thinking thus lightly of the peril, you tell me you were so carried away by your angry feeling as to hesitate whether or not to leave me to perish," returned Annie reflectively. "How strange that the mind can be engrossed by passion so completely as to banish all its natural impulses!"

"You will laugh at me, and think my German education has filled my brain with strange, wild fancies," replied Lewis; "but I believe that we are under a species of demoniacal possession at such moments—that by indulging our evil feelings instead of resisting them we have given Satan additional power over us. You know the legend of the Wild Huntsman: I cannot but look upon the description of the spirit-riders who accompanied the baron, one on a white, the other on a black steed, and alternately plied him with good and evil counsel, less as an allegory than a reality."

"You believe, then, that we are constantly surrounded by spiritual beings imperceptible to our bodily senses?" asked Annie. "It is rather a fearful idea."

"Believe," returned Lewis, "is perhaps too strong a term to apply to any theory not distinctly borne out by Holy Writ, but as far as I have studied the subject, I think the existence of spiritual beings of opposite natures, some good, some evil, is clearly indicated by Scripture; and there are many passages which would lead one to suppose that they are permitted, under certain restrictions, to interest themselves in mundane affairs, and influence the thoughts which are the springs of human actions—immaterial agents, in fact, for working out the will of God. Nor do I see anything fearful in the idea; on the contrary, as we cannot doubt that it is our own fault if the evil spirits ever prevail against us, and that good angels witness our struggles to do right, and are at hand to assist us, I consider the theory a most consolatory one."

"I never looked at the subject in this light before," observed Annie thoughtfully. "Of course, like most other people, I had a vague, visionary kind of belief in the existence of good angels and evil spirits, but I never applied the belief practically, never imagined they had anything to do with *me*; and yet it seems reasonable that what you have suggested should be the case. Oh! if we could but have our spiritual eyes open so that we could see them, we then should love the good angels so much, and hate and fear the evil ones to such a degree, that it would be quite easy to act rightly, and impossible to do wrong."

"I suppose, if our faith were as strong as it should be," returned Lewis, "we ought so to realise the truths of Christianity that we should feel as you describe."

His companion made no reply, but sat for some minutes apparently pursuing the train of thought to which his words had given rise. At length rousing herself, she turned to Lewis, saying, with a *naïve* smile, "We shall be capital friends, I see. I did not know you could talk so nicely about things of this kind. I delight in people who give me new ideas—you must teach me German, too, when all this bustle is over. I shall ask papa to let you do so. I want to learn German above everything, and to read Schiller, and Goethe, and La Motte Fouqué, and all sorts of people. Will you take compassion on my ignorance, and accept me as a pupil? I shall not be quite as dull as poor Walter, I hope."

"I shall be delighted to play Master of the Ceremonies to introduce you to those of the German authors who are best worth knowing, always provided that the General approves of my so doing," returned Lewis.

"Oh! papa will approve," replied Annie. "He can care nothing about it one way or another, and whenever that is the case he always lets me do as I like; and as to Aunt Martha—well, there may be some difficulty with her, I confess, but the most ferocious animals are tamed by kindness, and it's hard if I can't coax her into submission to my will and pleasure."

"I flatter myself I have become rather a favourite with Miss Livingstone since the affair of the horses," observed Lewis. "I have heard her describe me as 'a young man of unusual abilities and irreproachable moral character' to three distinct sets of visitors during the last week."

"You've caught her tone exactly," returned Annie, laughing; "but it's very abominable of you to deride my venerable aunt."

And so they chatted on, Lewis forgetting alike his proud reserve and his dependent position in his pleasure in once again meeting with the kindness and sympathy to which he had been so long a stranger, and Annie engrossed by the joy with which she perceived the ice that care and sorrow had frozen round the heart of her young companion melt before the fascination of her look and manner; and when the phaeton drew up before the ample portals of Broadhurst, it would have been hard to decide which of the two felt most sorry that pleasant drive had come so quickly to an end.

Our train still runs along the RAILROAD OF LIFE, but a most important station has been passed when Lewis first arrived at the conclusion that he had ceased to dislike Annie Grant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DE GRANDEVILLE THREATENS A CONFIDENCE AND ELICITS CHARLEY LEICESTER'S IDEAS ON MATRIMONY.

It was the morning of Twelfth-day, and in Broadhurst's ancient mansion confusion reigned supreme; for Twelfth-night was to be

celebrated with high festivities. A grand ball was about to be given to the county, and legions of upholsterers' men had taken the house by storm, and were zealously employed in turning it out of the windows. Minerva was great upon the occasion; starched to the *n*th, she rustled through the apartments like an austere whirlwind, striking an icy terror into the hearts of the stoutest workmen, and leading the chief upholsterer himself the life of a convicted felon on the treadmill—solitary confinement, implying separation from Minerva, would have been a boon to that harassed tradesman. Whatever he put up she instantly had taken down; all his suggestions she violently opposed; he never gave an order that she did not contradict; when he was downstairs she required him at the top of the house; if he appeared without his hat, she took him out of doors. Foxe's Martyrs would seem a mere book of sports beside a faithful chronicle of all that upholsterer suffered on the occasion at the hands of Minerva Livingstone. Had he not been endowed with remarkable tenacity of life, ere he had set that house in order he would have died.

Amongst others of the dispossessed, Charley Leicester, having retreated from room to room before the invaders, at last, fairly driven out, was fain to seek refuge in the garden. In this extremity he betook himself to a certain terrace-walk, where he trusted to find sunshine and quiet. Having, as he fondly imagined, secured these necessary ingredients to his happiness, he was proceeding to recruit exhausted nature with a mild cigar, when a footstep was heard approaching, and immediately afterwards the erect and portly form of *the* De Grandeville hove in sight and bore down upon him. Now it must be known that these two gentlemen regarded each other with very different feelings—Leicester, albeit by no means given to discovering faults of character in his acquaintances, could not but perceive the absurd self-consequence and pompous pride which were so palpably displayed in De Grandeville's every look and action, and while this revolted his good taste and produced in him a passive feeling of dislike, the style of conversation usually adopted by the redoubtable Marmaduke, which, however it might begin, invariably ended in some form of self-glorification, actively bored him. Accordingly, it was with anything but a feeling of satisfaction that he now witnessed his approach. De Grandeville, on the other hand, looked up to Leicester on account of his connection with the peerage, and knowing his popularity among the best set of men about town, regarded him as an oracle on all points of *etiquette* and *bien-séance*. Being, therefore, at that moment in the act of revolving in his anxious mind a most weighty matter on which he required good advice, Charley was the man of all others he most wished to meet with. Marching vigorously onward he soon reached the spot where, half-sitting, half-lying, on the broad top of a low stone balustrade, Leicester was ruminating over his cigar. Having halted immediately in front of his victim, De Grandeville raised his hand to his forehead in a military salute, which manœuvre, acquired partly in jest, partly in earnest, had now become habitual to him.

“Ar—enjoying a weed, eh! Mr. Leicester?” he began. “‘Pon my word,

you've selected a most picturesque spot for your bivouac. If it's not against the standing orders to smoke here, I'll join you in a cigar, for—ar—to tell you the truth, I rather want five minutes' conversation with you."

"I'm in for it," thought Leicester. "Well, what must be, must; the sun will be off here in about half-an-hour, and I suppose I can endure him for that space of time." He only said, however, holding out his cigar-case languidly, "Can I offer you one?"

"Ar—many thanks, you're one of the few men whose taste I can rely on; but—ar—really, the things they sell now, and pretend to call genuine, are such trash, that—ar—I am forced to import my own. I sent out an agent to Cuba express—ar—at least, Robinson, who supplies my club—ar—the Caryatides, you know—sent him on a hint from me, and I can't match the cigars he brought me anywhere; I've never met with anything like them. Ask your brother; he knows them—ar—I let him have half a box as the greatest favour."

"Bell lives on cigars and gin-and-water when he's in his native state," returned Leicester, slightly altering his position so that he could rest his back more conveniently against a statue. "If he's been going too fast, and gets out of condition, he takes a course of that sort of thing, and it always brings him right again; it's like turning a screwy horse out to grass."

De Grandeville, who had appeared somewhat abstracted during this interesting record of the domestic habits of Lord Bellefield, changed the conversation by observing, "Ar—you see, when a man of a certain—ar—position in society gets—ar—towards middle life—ar—say, three or four-and-thirty, it appears to me that it adds very much to his weight to—ar—to—"

"To drink brown stout instead of pale ale," exclaimed Leicester more eagerly than his wont. "I observed you did so at —, when we were treating the incorruptible electors, and it struck me as a decided mistake."

"Ar—yes, I believe—that is, of course—you are right; but that was not exactly what I was going to observe," returned De Grandeville, slightly embarrassed. "In fact, I was going to say that it adds to a man's weight in society, increases his influence, and improves his general position to be—ar—well married!"

"About that I scarcely know; it's not a matter to decide on hastily," returned Leicester, coolly lighting a fresh cigar, which, being of an obstinate disposition, required much scientific management and considerable hard puffing to induce it to perform properly. "In regard to (puff) marriage, Mr. De Grandeville, looking at it philosophically—and I can assure you it's a subject on which I've expended much (puff, puff) serious thought,—looking at it in a reasonable business-like point of view, it becomes a mere (puff) affair of debtor and creditor,—a question of what you lose and what you gain. Let us try the matter by various tests and see how the account stands. We'll begin with the watchwords of the day, for instance: 'Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality.' Liberty,—a single man can do as he likes without consulting anybody; a married man can do as he likes only when his wife shares the inclination, which, as no two

people ever look at anything in exactly the same point of view, appears a somewhat stringent restriction. Fraternity,—a single man may choose his friends where he feels inclined, male or female, as it may have pleased Providence to create them; a married man dare not, unless he has a taste for domestic misery, and possesses eyes which are nail-proof, cultivate a female friendship, and somehow one feels if one were married one should not exactly wish to have a set of men always dangling about one's house. Equality,—a single man, if he has received a gentleman's education, wears a good coat, and has wit enough to keep himself warm, is anybody's equal; a married man must bear all his wife's burdens as well as his own, and doesn't get asked by the Browns because the Smiths have told them her great-grandfather was transported for stealing a pewter pot. Now, let us look at the per contra side. A single man soon gets tired of his unlimited Liberty; there's no fun in having your own way if you've no one to contradict you. A little opposition becomes a positive luxury, and this you're sure to obtain by matrimony. Then, as to Fraternity, friends are better than acquaintances, certainly, just as a mule is preferable to a jackass, but they're not much comfort to one after all. My most intimate friend lives in Ceylon and writes to me once in five years about hunting elephants. Now, your wife is part of your goods and chattels, belongs to you as completely as your boot-jack, and when in hours of indolence you wish to sit with your soul in slippers, she, if she is worth her salt, is ready to pull off the psychological boots that are pinching your mind, and prevent the *dolce far niente* from becoming meaningless and insipid. Lastly, there's no such Equality in the world as between husband and wife when they are really suited to each other, appreciate their relative positions justly, and endeavour to make practice and principle coincide. These are my ideas regarding the marriage state, Mr. De Grandeville; but 'tis no use discussing the matter. Society has long since decided the question in favour of wedlock, and there are only enough exceptions to prove the rule. Byron enunciated a great truth when he declared—

“ ‘Man was not formed to live alone;’

the animal's gregarious, sir, and the solitary system is totally opposed to all its tastes and habits.”

So saying, Charley emitted a long puff of smoke, and caressing his whiskers, calmly awaited his companion's reply; but this demands a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RELATES HOW CHARLEY LEICESTER WAS FIRST “SPRIGHTEED BY A FOOL,” THEN BESET BY AN AMAZON.

“AR—really—'pon my word, you seem to have studied the subject deeply, Mr. Leicester,” returned De Grandeville, who was somewhat

astonished at the length and volubility of Charley's notable "Essay on Matrimony," with which the last chapter was concluded, and too completely blinded by self-importance to perceive that the other was more or less laughing at him. "However, the drift of your argument appears in favour of marriage, and—ar—in fact—ar—I quite think as you do on the matter. Now, in my position, I consider such an arrangement would be most desirable, always supposing one can meet with—ar—a suitable partner."

"Ay, there's the rub," rejoined Leicester, leisurely flipping the ashes from the end of his cigar.

"I consider that I have a right to look—ar—high," continued De Grandeville, folding his arms with dignity. "Our family dates from the Conquest; our Original ancestor came over as equerry to William of Normandy. I suppose you are aware how the name arose from an incident in that invasion?"

Leicester professed his ignorance of the anecdote, and De Grandeville proceeded: "My ancestor, who, like most of his descendants, was a remarkably long-sighted individual, was riding near the person of his liege lord some few days after the victory of Hastings, when at the extreme verge of the horizon he descried the city of Canterbury, and in the excitement of the moment he exclaimed, pointing with his mailed hand, '*Voila! une grande ville.*' William overheard the remark, and fixing his piercing glance upon him, observed sarcastically, 'Ha! sayest thou so? he who hath been the first to discern yon great city should be the first to enter it.' 'By the grace of God, and with your permission, Sire, so I will,' exclaimed my ancestor. William nodded assent, my ancestor clapped spurs to his horse, and never drew bridle till the standard of Normandy floated on the highest tower of Canterbury. For this gallant exploit he was made governor of the city, and received the name and titles of De Grandeville. It's—ar—a creditable story."

"Extremely," returned Leicester, yawning. "I've a vague idea the man we all came from was hanged for horse-stealing."

"Ar—yes—very good," rejoined De Grandeville, recognising an excellent jest in his companion's assertion; "but, as I was about to observe, in my position a man owes as it were a duty to his family; he ought not to marry a nobody."

"Decidedly, such a connection should be avoided," returned Charley sententiously, presenting the hot end of his cigar to an inquisitive snail which appeared inclined to join the party.

"Ar—the De Grandevilles have been from time immemorial large landed proprietors," resumed their grandiloquent descendant; "half the county of — belongs to them; the estates held by my branch of the family are immense, and though—ar—just at present they are not exactly in my possession, yet if anything were to happen to my cousin Hildebrand and his seven boys, I might be placed in—ar—a very different position; therefore, in looking out for a wife, I hold it incumbent on me to select a lady who would not disgrace a prominent situation, were she called upon to fill one."

Leicester (whose attention had been thoroughly engrossed by the

snail, which, after having made sundry futile attempts to avoid the cigar and continue its onward course, had at length yielded the point, and having turned round, was now crawling off in an opposite direction) somewhat astonished his companion by quoting with great *empressement* the words of the old nursery ballad—

“ Off he set
With his opera hat.”

As, however, he immediately afterwards assumed a look of the deepest attention, De Grandeville set it down as an instance of the eccentricity of genius, and continued—“Ar—this, as you must perceive, renders certain qualifications essential in the object of my choice. I could select no one who by birth and position was not perfectly unexceptionable. I should also require her to possess, in an eminent degree, the manners of society; another great point would be—ar——”

“Plenty of tin,” suggested Charley, making a face at the retreating snail.

“Ar—yes—in my position it would of course be a matter of prudence, before bringing upon myself the expenses of a family, to ascertain that I can command an income sufficient to enable me to mix in the set to which—ar—in point of fact, I belong.”

“Nothing under £3000 a year would suit my book,” replied Leicester. “£3000 per annum and perfection I might put up with, but £4000 would be better without an actual angel, and beyond that mark I’d bate an attaching quality in the damsel for every additional £500 in the funds.”

“Ar—I have reason to believe that the income of the lady in regard to whom I am about to ask your advice exceeds the sum you first mentioned,” replied De Grandeville.

“Oh, there is then a real *bona fide* lady in the case—you’ve positively marked down your bird?” exclaimed Leicester. “Pray, have I the honour of her acquaintance?”

“Ar—yes—I have often met her in your society—in fact, she forms one of the party now domesticated at Broadhurst.”

“Staying in the house, eh?” returned Charley, feeling slightly curious. “By Jove! who can it be? you’re not going to try and cut out Bellefield by proposing for my cousin Annie, are you? I wish you would, it would sell Bell so beautifully.”

“Of course—ar—you are joking,” returned De Grandeville proudly. “I would not do such a shabby thing by his lordship upon any consideration.”

Leicester was amused at the cool way in which his companion seemed to take it for granted that he had only to enter the lists against his brother in order to secure the prize. He kept his entertainment to himself, however, merely replying, “Well, if it isn’t Annie, who is it? I can scarcely imagine you have set your affections on Miss Livingstone.”

“The Livingstones are a good old family,” returned De Grandeville, “but the representative of the name to whom you allude would have been a more suitable match for my late excellent father than

for myself. No, sir, the lady to whom I may probably offer the opportunity of allying herself to the house of De Grandeville is as suitable in age as in all other qualifications—Miss Peyton is in her two-and-twentieth year.”

“Miss how much!” exclaimed Leicester impetuously, sitting bolt upright and flinging the remnant of his cigar after the snail, which was yet striving to make good its retreat.

“Miss Laura Peyton,” returned De Grandeville; “I don’t wonder you are surprised. I am aware, as well as yourself, that her grandfather was in trade. I can assure you that stood in my way for a long time, and it was not till I had gone through the pedigree carefully, with a friend in the Herald’s College, and clearly traced back the family to the time of Richard Cœur de Lion, that I ever thought seriously of the thing.”

“And how do you mean to carry on the campaign?” asked Leicester, who had by this time recovered his composure. “Do you intend to lay regular siege to the young lady’s affections, or is it to be a look-and-die, ‘*veni, vidi, vici*’ affair?”

“Ar—really—I am scarcely sanguine enough to hope to carry the citadel by a *coup-de-main*,” returned De Grandeville; “but my tactics will be very much regulated by those of my fair enemy at present. If I might judge by one or two slight skirmishes we have had together, the garrison will not hold out to extremity when once the breastworks are taken, and the place properly invested.” At this moment a servant approached De Grandeville with a message from General Grant requesting his presence. “Ar—yes—say I’ll attend the General immediately,” was the reply; then, as the servant departed, De Grandeville continued, “Ar—the course of true love never did run smooth, you see, Mr. Leicester. Ar—I shall have an opportunity of speaking to you again on this matter, and hearing your opinion more in full; at present I must wish you good morning.” So saying, he slightly raised his hat in salutation, and marched off in a great state of dignified self-complacency.

Leicester watched him till he was out of sight; then, springing from his seat, he began pacing up and down the terrace with hasty strides, muttering from time to time such uncomplimentary remarks as, “Insufferable puppy!” “Conceited ass!” all of which evidently bore reference to his late companion. Having let off a little of his extra steam by this means, he gave vent to the following soliloquy: “Well, I’m nicely in for it this time! Because a love affair, with the chance of possible consequences, wasn’t trouble enough, I must have a rival step in—and such a rival—why, the very sight of that man disagrees with me; and then to hear him talk, it’s positively sickening! I’ll be off to London to-morrow morning; and yet I do like the girl,—I know I do, because it is continually occurring to me that I am not half good enough for her. I suppose she looks upon me as a mere fortune-hunter—thinks I only care about her for the sake of her money. I wish she hadn’t a farthing! I wish—eh! what am I talking about? Heigho! that’s another curse of poverty: a poor devil like me can’t even afford the luxury of a disinterested attachment. Then

that man—that De Grandeville—to hear an animal like that debating whether she was good enough for him! I declare he's made me feel quite feverish! I'd no idea it was possible for *anything* to excite me to such a degree. If the notion were not too preposterous, I should really begin to fancy I must be falling in love! She never can have the bad taste to like him—in fact, there's nothing to like in him—and yet the fellow seemed confident; but that is the nature of the brute. Though I don't know, women are such fools sometimes, she might take him at his own price—that military swagger of his might go down with some of the sex. Once let a woman fancy a man to be a hero, or a martyr, or a patriot, or any other uncomfortable celebrity certain to make a bad husband, and she will be ready to throw herself at his head,—just as if such a fellow were not the very last man in the world whom she ought to select! I suppose it's the additional odds in favour of widowhood that constitute the great attraction—females are naturally capricious. Well, I shall try and take the matter easily, at all events. I dare say it won't break my heart whichever way it goes. I shall make observations, and if she really has the bad taste to prefer this man, he's welcome to her—a woman who could love *him* would never do for my wife; that one fact would argue an amount of incompatibility of temper which would be furnishing work for Doctors' Commons before the first year's connubial infelicity was over. I wonder whether there's any lunch going on; it's astonishing how thirsty anything of this kind makes me! Pale ale I must have, or *ruit cœlum!*” And having arrived at this conclusion, he thrust his hands—of whose delicate appearance he was especially careful—into his pockets to preserve them from the cold, and strolled off to put his resolution into practice.

In the meantime, Marmaduke De Grandeville, while listening with his outward ears to General Grant's dull electioneering details, was inwardly congratulating himself on the favourable impression he had made on that very sensible young man, the Honourable Charles Leicester, and thinking what a useful ally he had secured to assist him in carrying out his matrimonial project.

Verily, there are as many comedies performed off the stage as upon it!

The ball at Broadhurst took place on the evening of the day on which the above conversation had passed, and was a wonderful affair indeed. It was given for a special purpose, and that purpose was to conciliate everybody, and induce everybody to promise General Grant their vote and interest at the ensuing election. Accordingly, everybody was invited—at least everybody who had the slightest pretension to be anybody—and everybody came; and as almost everybody brought somebody else with them, a wife, or a daughter, or the young lady from London who was spending Christmas with them, there was no lack of guests. The object of the entertainment was no secret; and the king of the county, the Marquis of C—, being in the conservative interest, and consequently anxious to secure the General's return, not only came himself, but actually brought a real live duke with him to exhibit to the company. This was a great stroke of

policy, and told immensely, particularly with the smaller anybodies who were almost nobodies, but who, having associated with a duke, straightway became somebodies, and remained so ever after. Moreover, in all cases of incipient radicalism, chartist tendencies, or socialist symptoms, his Grace was an infallible specific. Depend on it, there is no better remedy for a certain sort of democracy than a decoction of strawberry-leaves; apply that to the sore place and the patient instantly becomes sound in his opinions, and continues a healthy member of the body politic. The particular duke on the occasion in question was a very young one, little more than a boy in fact (if a duke can ever be considered in the light of a boy). This youthful nobleman had a leading idea—though you would hardly have supposed it, to look at him—he believed that he was the best match in England; and so, in the conventional sense of the term, he undoubtedly was, although he would have been very dear at the price to any woman with a head and a heart. His pastors and masters, backed by the maternal anxieties of a duchess unambitious of the dignities of dowagership, had sedulously cultivated this one idea till it had assumed the character of a monomania, under the influence of which this unhappy scion of aristocracy looked upon life as a state of perpetual warfare against the whole race of women, and was haunted by a frightful vision of himself carried off and forcibly married to the chief of a horde of female pirates, with long tongues, longer nails, and an utter absence of creditable ancestry. His outward duke (if we may be allowed the expression) was decidedly prepossessing. He was tall and not ungraceful in figure, and had a bright, round, innocent face, as of a good child. His hair was nicely brushed and parted; whiskers he had none; indeed, the stinginess of nature to him in this particular was so remarkable, that, as the eldest Miss Simpkins afterwards observed to an eager audience of uninvited younger sisters, "So far from whiskers, my dears, now I come to think of it, his Grace had *rather the reverse!*" However, take him "for all in all," he was a very creditable young duke, and a perfect godsend on the occasion in question. Then there was a descending scale from his Grace downwards, leading through the aristocracy of birth to the aristocracy of riches, till it reached the *élite* of the country towns, and the more presentable specimens of yeomen farmers. But let us join a group of people that we know, and hear what they think of the guests who are so rapidly assembling.

In a snug corner of the reception-room, not far from a door leading into the large drawing-room, stands one of those mysterious innovations of modern upholstery, a species of the genus ottoman, which resembles a Brobdignagian mushroom, with a thimble made to match stuck in the middle of it. Seated at her ease upon this nondescript, half-buried by the yielding cushions, appeared the pretty figure of Laura Peyton; by her side, attired in much white muslin, crinolined to a balloon-like rotundity, but which apparently had shrunk abominably at the wash in the region round about its wearer's neck and shoulders, sat another—well, from the juvenility of her dress and manners we suppose we must say *young* lady, though it was a

historical fact that she had been at school with Annie Grant's mother; but then poor Mrs. Grant married when she was quite a child, and died before she was thirty, and of course Miss Singleton must know her own age best, and she had declared herself eight-and-twenty for the last five years. This lady possessed one peculiarity—she always had a passion for somebody; whether the *object* was of the gentler or the sterner sex was all a matter of chance; but as she was in the habit of observing, “there existed in her nature a necessity for passionately loving,” and it has become proverbial that necessity has no law. The object of her adoration just at present was “that darling girl,” Laura Peyton; and really that young lady was in herself so lovable, that to endeavour to account for Miss Singleton's devotion by insinuating that the heiress was usually surrounded by all the most desirable young men in the room would be the height of ill-nature.

“Dear me!” exclaimed Miss Singleton, whose troublesome nature had another necessity for liking to hear its own voice as often as possible. “Dear me! I wish I knew who all the people were! Dearest Miss Peyton, do not you sympathise? Ah, that tell-tale smile! We girls certainly are sadly curious, though I believe the men are just as bad, only they're too proud to own it. But really, we must contrive to catch somebody who will tell us who everybody is. There's that handsome, grave, clever Mr. Arundel: I shall make him a sign to come here—ah! he saw me directly—he *is* so clever. Mr. Arundel, do tell me, who *are* all these people?”

“Rather a comprehensive question,” returned Lewis, smiling; “moreover, you could scarcely have applied to any one less able to answer it, for beyond our immediate neighbours I really do not know a dozen people in the room.”

“Mr. Arundel's acquaintance lies rather among illustrious foreigners,” observed Miss Peyton demurely. “Were any members of the royal family of Persia present, for instance, his intimate knowledge of the language, manners, and habits of that interesting nation would be invaluable to us.”

“As you are strong, be merciful,” returned Lewis, in a tone of voice only to be heard by the young lady to whom he spoke.

“Dear me! How very delightful! What a thing it is to be so clever!” exclaimed Miss Singleton, arranging her bracelet and rounding her arm (which was now one of her best points) with an action that expressed, as plainly as words could have done, “There, look at that—there's grace for you!” “Here comes some one who can tell us everything,” she continued; “that good-natured, fascinating Mr. Leicester, with his loves of whiskers all in dear little curls. Tiresome man! he won't look this way. Would you be so very good, Mr. Arundel, as to follow him and bring him here? Say that Miss Peyton and I want him particularly.”

“I beg you'll say nothing of the kind, Mr. Arundel,” interposed Laura quickly, with a very becoming blush. “Really, Miss Singleton, you run on so that——”

“I will deliver your message verbatim, Miss Singleton,” returned Lewis with the same demure tone and manner in which Miss Peyton

had referred to the Persian prince; and without waiting to mark the effect of his words, he mingled with the crowd, and almost immediately returned with the gentleman in pursuit of whom he had been despatched. Charles Leicester, who was most elaborately got up for the occasion, though his good taste prevented him from running into any absurd extremes in dress, looked remarkably handsome, and being flattered by the summons he had just received, particularly happy. Both these facts Miss Peyton discovered at a glance, but whether urged by some secret consciousness, or annoyed by an indescribable look of intelligence which lurked in the corners of Lewis's dark eyes and revealed itself through the sternness of his compressed lips, she received him with marked coldness, and observed, in reply to his offer to play showman to the collection of strange animals there assembled, that she had no taste for zoology, and that it was Miss Singleton's curiosity he had been summoned to satisfy.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Leicester," exclaimed that mature damsel, in no way daunted by a shade of discontent which, despite his endeavours to the contrary, overspread the countenance of the gentleman she was addressing; "yes, indeed, I'm dying to know all sorts of things. In the first place, who's that tall, stout gentleman in the wonderful waistcoat?"

"That," replied Leicester, coolly examining the person indicated, "that is—no, it isn't! Yes, surely!—I thought I was right—that is the Marquis of Carabbas." Then seeing from her manner she did not recognise the name, he continued, "He has enormous estates situated in——"

"Where?" asked Miss Singleton earnestly, thinking she had lost the name.

"That interesting tract of country yclept, by John Parry, the Realms of Infantine Romance," continued Leicester.

"Oh, Mr. Leicester, you're laughing at me. How wicked of you—the Marquis of Carabbas! Let me see: hadn't he something to do with Whittington and his Cat?"

"With the cat, possibly," replied Leicester; "for if my memory fail not, the fortunes of the noble Marquis, like those of the ever-to-be-lamented Lord Mayor of London town, were the result of feline sagacity, and it's not likely there existed two such talented cats—even Puss in Boots may only be another episode in the career of the same gifted individual."

"Another of its nine lives, in fact," suggested Lewis.

"Yes, of course," rejoined Leicester. "I dare say it was the original 'cat of nine tails,' only, like the sibylline leaves, several of the manuscripts have been lost to posterity through the carelessness of some elfin Master of the Rolls."

"I beg your pardon, but I really must interrupt you," exclaimed Miss Singleton. "Can you tell me, soberly and seriously, who that very strange-looking person may be who has just seized the General's hand and nearly shaken his arm out of the socket?"

Seeing that Laura Peyton's eyes asked the same question, though her lips were silent, Leicester glanced in the direction indicated, and

immediately replied, "That energetic female rejoices in the name of Lady Mary—but is more commonly known among her intimates as *Jack*—Goodwood. In person she is what you behold her; in character, she presents a most unmitigated specimen of the *genus* Amazon; for the rest, she is a very good woman at heart, but my especial torment; she always calls me Charley, and her usual salutation is a slap on the back. She hunts, shoots, breaks in her own horses, has ridden a hurdle race, in which she came in a good second, and is reported to have dragooned her husband into popping the question by the threat of a sound horse-whipping. And now, Miss Singleton, you'll have an opportunity of judging for yourself, for she has caught sight of me, and is bearing down upon us in full sail."

"Well, but is she really a lady?" inquired the astonished Miss Singleton, who, in her philosophy, had most assuredly never dreamt of such a possibility as Jack Goodwood.

"She is second daughter of Lord Oaks," was the reply, "and Goodwood is one of *the* Goodwoods, and is worth some £8000 a year; but here she is."

As he spoke the lady in question joined the group. Her age might be eight or nine-and-thirty; she was tall and decidedly handsome, though her features were too large; she had magnificent black eyes and very white teeth, which prevented the width of her mouth from interfering with her pretensions to beauty; her complexion was brilliant in the extreme, nature having bestowed on her a clear brown skin, which withstood the combined effects of exposure to sun and wind, and softened the high colour induced by the boisterous character of her ladyship's favourite pursuits. But if her personal gifts were striking, the style or costume she saw fit to adopt rendered her still more remarkable. As it will be necessary to describe her dress minutely in order to convey any idea of her appearance, we throw ourselves on the mercy of our lady readers, and beg them to pardon all errors of description, seeing that mantua-making is a science in which we have never graduated, and of which our knowledge is derived solely from oral traditions picked up during desultory conversations among our female friends, usually held (if our memory fail us not) on their way home from church.

Her dress consisted, then, of a gown of exceedingly rich white silk, made half-high in the body and remarkably full in the skirt, over which she wore a polka of bright scarlet Cashmere lined and trimmed with white silk, and adorned with a double row of the hunt buttons. Her head was attired in a Spanish hat of black velvet, while a single white feather, secured by a valuable diamond clasp, was allowed to droop over the brim and mingle with the rich masses of her raven hair, which was picturesquely arranged in a complication of braids and ringlets. She leaned on the arm of a gentleman double her age, whose good-humoured heavy face afforded a marked contrast to the ever-varying expression that lit the animated features of her who was, in every sense of the word, his better half. Leicester's description had but slightly enhanced the vigour of her mode of

salutation, for as she reached the spot where he stood she clapped him on the shoulder with a small, white-gloved hand, exclaiming in a deep but not unmusical voice—

“Bravo, Charley! run you to earth at last, you see. Where have you hidden yourself all this age? Now, Goody,” she continued, turning to her husband, “you may go. Charley Leicester will take care of me—don’t lose your temper at whist, don’t drink too much champagne, and mind you’re forthcoming when I want you.”

“There’s a life to lead,” returned her spouse, appealing to Leicester. “Did you ever see such a tyrant?”

“Be off, Goody, and don’t talk nonsense,” was his lady-wife’s rejoinder.

“How is it we never see you at the Manor-House now?” began the master of that establishment in a hospitable tone of voice, but his lady cut him short in his speech by exclaiming—

“Why? because he found you such a bore he could not stand you any longer; nobody can except me, and even my powers of endurance are limited, so,” she continued, taking him by the shoulders and turning him round, “right about face—heads up—march. *Voilà*,” she added, turning to Leicester, “he’s famously under command, isn’t he, Charley? all my good breaking in—he was as obstinate as a mule before I married him, nobody could do anything with him. He’s in splendid condition, too, for a man of sixty. I’ll back him to walk, ride, hunt, shoot, or play at billiards with any man of his age and weight in the three kingdoms. I’ve been obliged to dock his corn, though; there was seldom a day that he didn’t finish his second bottle of port. He only drinks one now. But I say, Charley, about this election of Governor Grant’s, how is he going the pace? You must tell me all about it; I’ve been in Paris for the last two months, and I’m quite in the dark.”

“’Pon my word, I take so little interest in the matter that I can scarcely enlighten you, Lady Mary,” returned Leicester, glancing uneasily at Miss Peyton, who was talking with much apparent *empressement* to Miss Singleton, though her quick ears drank in every word spoken by the others.

“Who’s that girl?” resumed Lady Mary, lowering her voice a little (*very* little) as she perceived the direction of Leicester’s glance. “Miss Peyton, eh?” she continued, “You shall introduce me; but first tell me who’s that man by her side, like an old picture.”

“Mr. Arundel,” was the reply; “tutor to poor young Desborough.”

“He’s too good for the work,” returned Jack; “he’s too near thoroughbred to take to collar and keep his traces tight with such an uphill pull as that must be. I say, Charley,” she continued in a half whisper, “he’s handsomer than you are. If you don’t mind your play, he’ll bowl you out and win with the favourite—there, it’s no use getting up the steam or looking sulky with me,” she added, as Leicester uttered an exclamation of annoyance. “I can see it all with half an eye; you’re as thoroughly what Goody calls ‘spoony’ as a man need to be; but now, Charley, don’t go putting your foot in it, you know: is it all right with the tin? that’s the main question.”



CHARLEY LEICESTER BESET BY AN AMAZON.

"Ask me to dance, for pity's sake, and let me get out of that creature's way," murmured Laura Peyton to Lewis; "I never had a taste for seeing monsters."

Lewis smiled and offered her his arm. At the same moment De Grandeville, gaudily ornate, marched up and requested the honour of Miss Peyton's hand for the set then forming.

"I am engaged to Mr. Arundel for the next quadrille," returned Miss Peyton.

"For the following one, then—ar?"

"I shall have much pleasure," was the reply. "In the meantime allow me to introduce you to my friend Miss Singleton, who is at present without a partner."

De Grandeville, charmed to have the opportunity of obliging Miss Peyton, acted on the hint, and the two couples hastened to take their places in the quadrille then forming. Leicester's volatile companion still continued chattering, heedless of his evident annoyance, until she had worried him into a state of mind bordering on distraction, when some fresh fancy seizing her, she fastened herself on to a new victim and left him to his meditations. These were by no means of an agreeable character; and after wandering listlessly through the suite of rooms and watching Laura Peyton, as during the intervals of the dance she talked and laughed gaily with De Grandeville (an occupation which did not tend greatly to raise Leicester's spirits or soothe his ruffled temper), he strolled into a card-room tenanted only by four elderly gentlemen immersed in a rubber of whist, and flinging himself on a vacant sofa in a remote corner of the apartment, gave himself up to gloomy retrospection.

He had not remained there long when Lewis entered and glanced round as if in search of some one; then approaching Leicester, he began—

"You've not seen Walter lately, have you? Your amusing friend, Lady Mary Goodwood" ("confound the jade," muttered Leicester, *sotto voce*) "introduced herself to me just now, and having captivated Walter by her bright smile and scarlet jacket, carried him off, to tease me, I believe, and I can't tell what she has done with him. But," he continued, for the first time observing his companion's dejected manner and appearance, "is anything the matter; you're not ill, I hope?"

"I wish I was," was the unexpected reply; "ill—dead—anything rather than the miserable fool I am——"

"Why, what has occurred?" asked Lewis anxiously. "Can I be of any use?"

"No, it's past mending," returned Leicester in an accent of deep dejection. He paused, then turning to Lewis he resumed almost fiercely: "The tale is soon told, if you want to hear it. I met that girl—Laura Peyton, I mean—in town about a year ago; in fact—for my affairs are no secret—every fool knows that I am a beggar, or thereabouts. I was introduced to her because she was a great heiress, and dangled after her through the whole of a London season for the sake of her three per cents. Well, last autumn I met

her again down in Scotland; we were staying together for three weeks in the same house. Of course we saw a good deal of each other, and I soon found I liked her better for herself than I had ever done for her money; but somehow, as soon as this feeling arose, I lost all nerve, and could not get on a bit. The idea of the meanness of marrying a woman for the sake of her fortune haunted me day and night, and the more I cared for her the less was I able to show it. My cousin Annie perceived what was going on, it seems, and without saying a word to me of her intention, struck up a friendship with Laura, and invited her here; and somehow—the thing's very absurd in a man like myself, who has seen everything and done everything, and found out what humbug it all is—but the fact of the matter is, that I'm just as foolishly and romantically and deeply in love with that girl as any raw boy of seventeen could be; and I don't believe she cares one *sous* about me in return. She thinks, as she has a good right to do, that I am hunting her for her money, like the rest of them, I dare say; and—stop a minute," he continued, seeing Lewis was about to speak—"you have not heard the worst yet: because all I've told you was not enough, that conceited ass, De Grandeville, must needs come and consult me this morning as to whether Miss Peyton was worthy of being honoured with his hand, hinting pretty plainly that he did not anticipate much difficulty on the lady's part; and by Jove, from the way in which she is going on with him this evening, I believe that for once he wasn't lying; then that mad-headed Mary Goodwood coming and bothering with her confounded 'Charley' this and 'Charley' that, and her absurd plan of monopolising one—of course she means no harm; she has known me from a boy, and it's her way; besides, she really is attached to old Goodwood. But how is Laura Peyton to know all that?"

"Why, rouse up, and go and tell her yourself, to be sure," replied Lewis.

"No, not I!" returned Leicester moodily. "I'll have no more trouble about it. I'll leave this house to-morrow morning, and be off to Baden, or Naples, or Timbuctoo, or some place where there are no women, if such a Paradise exists—and she may marry De Grandeville, or whom she pleases, for me. You see, it would be different if she cared at all for me, but to worry one's heart out about a girl who does not even like one—"

"*Halte là!*" interrupted Lewis; "lookers-on see most of the game; and if I know anything of woman's nature"—he paused and bit his lip as the recollection of Gretchen crossed his mind—"depend upon it, Miss Peyton is not as indifferent to you as you imagine."

"Did you see how coldly she received me to-night?" urged Leicester.

"Yes; and her so doing only confirmed my previous opinion. That chattering Miss Singleton had annoyed her by bidding me summon you in Miss Peyton's name; but the very fact of her annoyance showed consciousness; had she been indifferent to you she would not have cared. Then her irritation at Lady Mary's familiarity proves the same thing."

"You really think so?" returned Leicester, brightening up. "My dear fellow, you've quite put new life into me. It's very odd now, I never saw it in that light before. What would you have me do, then?"

"If, as you say, you really and truly love her," returned Lewis gravely, "lay aside—excuse my plain speaking—lay aside your fashionable airs, which disguise your true nature, and tell her of your affection in a simple, manly way, and if she is the girl I take her to be, your trouble will not be wasted." So saying, he rose and quitted the room, leaving Leicester to reflect on his advice.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONTAINS A MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT, AND SHOWS HOW THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DOES RUN SMOOTH.

AS Lewis, after the conversation detailed in the last chapter, was prosecuting his search for Walter through the various apartments he encountered Annie Grant, who, having escaped the vigilance of Miss Livingstone, was enjoying, in company with a young lady friend, the dangerous luxury of standing by an open window. The moment she perceived Lewis she advanced towards him and began—

"May I detain you one moment, Mr. Arundel? Can you tell me anything of my cousin Charles? I'm afraid he must be ill, and I wished him to exert himself so particularly to-night."

"He is not ill," returned Lewis. "I left him not two minutes since in the card-room."

"In the card-room?" repeated Annie in a tone of annoyance; "what can he be doing there? Is he playing whist?"

"No," was the reply; "he did not appear in a humour to enjoy the dancing, and had gone there for the sake of quiet."

"A fit of his incorrigible idleness, I suppose," remarked Annie pettishly; "really it is too provoking; it must seem so odd his absenting himself on such an occasion as this. Would you mind the trouble of returning and telling him I want to speak to him particularly, and that he will find me here?"

"I shall be most happy; it is no trouble," began Lewis. He paused, and then added in a lower tone, "Perhaps you scarcely do Mr. Leicester justice in attributing his absence to a fit of indolence; I fancied, from his manner, something had occurred to annoy him."

"Something to annoy him!" exclaimed Annie, starting and turning pale as a disagreeable possibility suddenly occurred to her. "Surely he has not?—she never can have——!" then seeing Lewis's glance fixed on her with a look of peculiar intelligence, she paused abruptly, and a most becoming blush overspread her features. Lewis pitied her confusion, and hastened to relieve it by observing—

"If I have ventured to guess the direction of your thoughts somewhat too boldly, Miss Grant, you must pardon me, and believe that

did I not think I might thereby in some slight degree repay the kindness Mr. Leicester has invariably shown me, I would not have allowed you to perceive it. If," he added in a lower tone, "you will permit me to advise you, I believe you could most effectually serve your cousin's interests by explaining to Miss Peyton, at your first opportunity, the nature of the friendship which exists between Lady Mary Goodwood and Mr. Leicester, mentioning at the same time the fact that they have known each other from childhood."

"That's the difficulty, is it?" rejoined Annie. "Oh! I can set that right in five minutes. Thank you very much, Mr. Arundel—how extremely kind you are; but," she added with an arch look, "you are most alarmingly clever; I shall become quite afraid of you." Then turning to her companion, she added, "Now, Lucy dear, you will catch your death of cold standing at that window. You will send Charles Leicester, then, Mr. Arundel." So saying, she linked her arm in that of her friend, and the two girls left the room.

"Leicester's a lucky dog to have such a zealous advocate in that sweet cousin of his," thought Lewis as he retraced his steps towards the card-room. "She is a great deal too good for that brute, Lord Bellefield; she had better have chosen Charles, if she must marry either brother, though he is scarcely her equal in mind or depth of character, and without that I don't believe married life can ever progress as it should do." On reaching the card-room he found it only tenanted by the whist players; and rightly imagining that his advice had so far restored Leicester's spirits as to induce him again to return to the ball-room, he resumed his search for Walter, and at length discovered him in the ice-room, where, under the auspices of a pretty, interesting looking girl, the daughter of one of the tenantry, called in on the occasion to assist the female servants, he was regaling himself with unlimited cakes.

While Lewis was gently insinuating the possibility of his having had enough, two or three men, amongst whom was Lord Bellefield, lounged into the room and began eating ices at a table opposite that at which Lewis and Walter were stationed. One of the party, who was unacquainted with Lewis, apparently struck by his appearance, addressed Lord Bellefield in an undertone, evidently inquiring who the young tutor might be; the answer, though spoken in a low voice, was (whether designedly or not we will not say) perfectly audible to the person to whom it related.

"That? oh, some poor devil old Grant has picked up cheap as dry-nurse to his pet idiot; a kind of male *bonne*, as the French term it; a sort of upper servant, half valet, half tutor. You need not notice him."

There was a degree of littleness in this speech which completely robbed it of its sting. It was such a mean attempt at an insult that Lewis saw it would be letting himself down even to feel angry about it; and merely allowing his lip to curl slightly with a contemptuous smile, he folded his arms and patiently awaited the conclusion of Walter's repast. After Lord Bellefield and his friends had devoured as many ices as seemed good to them, they prepared to leave the

room, and just as they passed the spot where Lewis stood, Lord Bellefield, in drawing out his handkerchief, accidentally dropped a glove. Not perceiving his loss, he was still walking on, when Lewis, after a moment's hesitation, resolved to adhere to his determination of treating Lord Bellefield as he would any other man his superior in rank, and perhaps inwardly rejoiced at the opportunity of returning good for evil, or at least civility for insult, stooped and picked up the glove, then advancing a step or two, he presented it to its owner, saying—

“Excuse my interrupting your lordship, but you have dropped your glove.”

Now it so happened that the moment before Lewis had removed his own glove to render some assistance to Walter, and had not replaced it when he extended his hand to Lord Bellefield, who, without making any reply, signed to his French valet, then assisting in the champagne department, and when he approached, said—

“*Tenez, Antoine!* Take the glove from this gentleman, and bring me a clean pair.”

The insolence of his look and the affected drawl in which he spoke rendered his meaning so unmistakable, that, after a slight attempt to repress the inclination, one of his companions burst into a laugh, while the other, who had sufficient good feeling to be disgusted at such an unprovoked insult, turned on his heel and walked away. Lewis stood for a moment as if stunned; then, flushing crimson, he actually quivered with suppressed anger; still it was evident that he was striving to master his passion, and apparently he was in great measure successful, for when he spoke it was in a low, calm voice.

“Am I to understand,” he said, “that your lordship, considering this glove polluted by the accident of my having touched it, will never wear it again?”

“Ya—as,” was the reply; “you may very safely come to that conclusion without any fear of misinterpreting my intentions.”

“In that case,” continued Lewis, in the same low, clear voice, though his eyes, which were fixed on Lord Bellefield's, actually glowed with the intensity of his emotion, “I will crave your permission to retain it as a memorial of this evening. Your lordship will observe it is a *right hand* glove. I may, on some future occasion, have the pleasure of calling your attention to the care with which I have preserved the relic.”

So saying, he bowed coldly, and still holding the glove with a vice-like grasp, as though he feared to have it wrested from him, he turned away without waiting a reply.

“What on earth does the fellow want with that glove?” inquired Lord Bellefield's companion, who, not being a particularly intellectual young gentleman, had been greatly mystified by the whole proceeding. “And what in the world is the matter with you?” he added, observing for the first time that his friend was looking strangely pale and shuddering slightly.

“Eh—come along—we're standing in a confounded draught, and

I've never rightly recovered that ague I picked up at Ancona," was the reply; and taking his companion's arm, Lord Bellefield hastily left the room.

So engrossed had Lewis been with his own share of the transaction that he had not observed the breathless interest with which the whole scene had been watched by the girl before alluded to. She now approached him under the excuse of offering some cakes, and, as he somewhat impatiently refused them, said in a hurried whisper—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but what is it you intend to do with that glove?"

Surprised alike at the question and the quarter from whence it proceeded, Lewis looked at the girl more attentively than he had yet done. She was above the middle height, and of a singularly graceful figure; her features were characterised by a degree of refinement and intelligence not usually to be found amongst persons of her class; she was very pale, and though she endeavoured to repress all outward signs of emotion, he could perceive she was fearfully agitated.

"Do with the glove!" returned Lewis. "What makes you ask such an odd question?"

"You cannot deceive me, sir," she replied in the same eager whisper. "I witnessed all that passed between you and—that gentleman just now."

"And what is it you fear?" asked Lewis.

"That you are going to challenge him to fight a duel to-morrow morning—and—and perhaps mean to wear that glove on the hand you shoot him with."

As she uttered these last words a strange expression flitted across Lewis's face; it had passed, however, ere he replied—

"You are mistaken. As long as I remain under this roof I shall avoid any collision with that gentleman. Nay, more; should he repeat his insult (though I scarcely think he will), I shall not attempt to resent it. So," he continued with a smile, "as I am living here, I think he is tolerably safe from me. Stay," he added, as, after glancing anxiously at his features, as though she strove to read his very soul, she was about to turn away, satisfied that he was not attempting to deceive her, "stay; do not mention what you have observed amongst the servants; and here is something to buy you some new ribbon for your cap."

"I will not accept your money, sir," she replied somewhat haughtily; "but your secret is safe with me as in the grave." Then taking Walter's plate, which was by this time empty, she crossed the room and mingled with the other servants.

It was later in the evening; much dancing had been accomplished, many civil speeches and some rude ones made, mild flirtations began to assume a serious character, and one or two aggravated cases appeared likely to end in business. The hearts of match-making mammas beat high with hope, marriageable daughters were looking up, and eligible young men, apparently bent on becoming tremendous sacrifices, were evidently to be had cheap. The real live Duke was in unusually high spirits; he had hitherto been mercifully preserved

from dangerous young ladies, and had passed a very pleasant evening. Lady Mary Goodwood, who was equal to a duke or any other emergency, had been introduced to him, and had taken upon herself the task of entertaining him; and his Grace, being slightly acquainted with Mr. Goodwood, and fortified by an unshakable faith in that gentleman's powers of longevity, had yielded himself unresistingly to the fascinations of the fair Amazon, and allowed himself to be amused with the most amiable condescension. Charles Leicester, in some degree reassured by his conversation with Lewis, returned to the dancing-room and secured Miss Peyton for a waltz; but his success did not tend greatly to improve his position, as the young lady continued strangely silent, or only opened her mouth to say cutting things. The last polka before supper she danced with De Grandeville; on that gentleman's arm she entered the room in which the repast was laid out, and he it was who, seated by her side during the meal, forestalled her every wish with most lover-like devotion. Lord Bellefield, after the *rencontre* with Lewis, had consoled himself by taking possession of Annie, whose side he never quitted for a moment, and who he thereby prevented from holding any private communication with her friend Miss Peyton, her acquaintance with the domestic economy of her uncle's family leading her to divine that his brother would be about the last person to whom Charles Leicester would wish his hopes and fears confided.

Seeing that things thus continued steadily to "improve for the worse," and that the tide which Shakespeare discovered in the affairs of men appeared to have set dead against him, the unfortunate "Charley" having, in a spirit of self-mortification, repudiated supper and rejected offers of champagne with the virulence of a red-hot teetotalter, betook himself to the solitude of the music-room in a state of mind bordering on distraction, which fever of the soul Lady Mary Goodwood had not tended to allay, by remarking, with a significant glance towards Miss Peyton and De Grandeville—

"I say, Charley, cast your eye up the course a minute; the heavy-weight's making play with the favourite at a killing pace. I'd bet long odds he pops and she says 'Done' before the meeting's over; so if that don't suit your book, Charley, my boy, the sooner you hedge on the double event the better."

The music-room at Broadhurst was a spacious apartment, with a coved ceiling and deep bay windows hung with rich crimson damask curtains, and containing ottomans of the same material in the recesses. On one of these Leicester flung himself, and half hidden by the voluminous folds of the drapery, sketched out a gloomy future, in which he depicted himself quarrelling with De Grandeville, shooting him in a consequent duel, and residing ever after in the least desirable part of the backwoods of America, a prey to remorse, without cigars, and cut off from kid gloves and pale ale in the flower of his youth. Occupied with these dreary thoughts, he scarcely noticed the entrance of various seceders from the supper-table; nor was it until the sound of the pianoforte aroused his attention that he perceived the room to be tenanted by some twenty or thirty people scattered in small

coterie throughout the apartment. At the moment when he became alive to external impressions Miss Singleton was about to favour the company with a song, having secured a mild young man to turn over the music, who knew not life and believed in her to the fullest extent with a touching simplicity. Before this interesting performance could commence, however, sundry preliminary arrangements analogous to the nautical ceremony of "clearing for action" appeared indispensable. First, a necessity existed for taking off her gloves, which was not accomplished without much rounding of arms, display of rings, and rattling of bracelets, one of which, in particular, would catch in everything, and was so incorrigible that it was forced to be unclasped in disgrace and committed to the custody of the mild young man, who blushed at it and held it as if it were alive. Then Miss Singleton drew up her head, elongated her neck to a giraffe-like extent, raised her eyes, simpered, cast them down again, glanced out of their corners at the "mild one" till he trembled in his polished boots and jingled the wicked bracelet like a baby's rattle in the excess of his agitation, and finally commenced her song by an energetic appeal to her mother (who had been dead and buried for the last fifteen years) to "wake her early" on the ensuing first of May. Just as she was assuring the company that "she had been wild and wayward, but she was not wayward now," a couple entered the room, and apparently wishing not to disturb the melody, seated themselves on a sofa in a retired corner which chanced to be nearly opposite to the recess of which Leicester had taken possession; thus, although the whole length of the music-room intervened, he could (himself unseen) catch occasional glimpses of this sofa as the ever-changing groups of loungers formed and dispersed themselves.

The occupants of the seat were Miss Peyton and De Grandeville; and could Charles Leicester have overheard the following conversation the passive annoyance with which he observed the colloquy might have given place to a more active sentiment.

"Ar—really," remarked De Grandeville, "that is a very—ar—touching, pathetic song——"

"Murdered," observed Miss Peyton, quietly finishing his sentence for him.

"Ar—eh—yes, of course, I was going to—ar—that is, your exquisite taste has—ar—in fact—ar—beyond a doubt the woman is committing murder."

"Recollect, the 'woman,' as you are pleased to call her, is my particular friend, Mr. De Grandeville," returned his companion with a slight degree of hauteur in her tone.

"Ar—yes, of course, that speaks volumes in her favour," was the rejoinder; "and although it is not every one who is gifted with the—ar—talent of vocalisation, yet the estimable qualities which one seeks in the—ar—endearing relation of friendship may be found—ar—that is, may exist—ar——"

"What did you think of the champagne at supper?" interrupted Miss Peyton abruptly.

"Really—ar—'pon my word I did not particularly notice it, I was—

ar—so agreeably situated that I could not devote much attention to the—ar—commissariat department.”

“Surely it was unusually strong,” persisted Laura.

“Ar—yes, of course you are right, it is no doubt owing to its agreeably exhilarating qualities that it is so universally popular with the fair sex. Were I—ar—so fortunate as to be—ar—a married man, I should always have champagne at my table.”

“What a temptation!” returned Miss Peyton, smiling ironically. “Your wife will be an enviable woman, if you mean to indulge her in such luxuries.”

“It delights me to hear you say so,” exclaimed De Grandeville eagerly. “If such is your opinion, I am indeed a fortunate man. I had not intended,” he continued in a lower tone, “to speak to you at this early period of our acquaintance on the subject nearest to my heart, but the—ar—very flattering encouragement—”

“Sir!” exclaimed Miss Peyton in a tone of indignant surprise.

“Which you have deigned to bestow upon me,” continued De Grandeville, not heeding the interruption, “leads me to unfold my intentions without further delay. I am now arrived at an age when, in the prime of life, and with judgment so matured that I consider I may safely act in obedience to its dictates without the risk of making any great mistake, it appears to me, and to those of my highly born and influential friends whom I have consulted on the subject, that I might greatly improve my general position in society by a judicious matrimonial alliance. Now, without being in the slightest degree actuated by—ar—anything approaching to a spirit of boasting, I may venture to say that in the selection of a partner for life I have a right to look—ar—high. My family may be traced back beyond the Norman conquest, and the immense estates in our possession—ar—my cousin Hildebrand holds them at present—but in the event of anything happening to his seven—ar—however, I need not now trouble you with such family details, suffice it to say that we are of ancient descent, enormous landed proprietors, and that my own position in society is by no means an unimportant one. Now, although I am aware that by birth you are scarcely—ar—that is—that the Peyton family cannot trace back their origin—ar—I have made up my mind to waive that point in consideration of—”

“Excuse me, sir,” interrupted Miss Peyton. “Doubtless your mature judgment has led you to discover many, in fact *some thousands* of good and weighty reasons why you should overlook the humble origin of the poor Peytons; but there is one point which appears to have escaped even your sagacity, namely, whether this unworthy descendant of an ignoble family desires the honour of such an alliance as you propose. That you may no longer be in doubt on the subject, allow me to thank you for the sacrifice you propose to make in my favour, and most unequivocally to decline it.”

No one could be in De Grandeville’s company for ten minutes without perceiving that on the one subject of his own importance he was more or less mad; but with this exception he was a clear-headed, quick-sighted man, used to society and accustomed to deal with

the world. Laura Peyton, in her indignation at the inflated style of the preamble of his discourse, had committed the indiscretion of refusing his hand before he had distinctly offered it. De Grandeville perceived the mistake, and hastened to avail himself of it by replying—

“Excuse me, Miss Peyton, but you jump rather hastily to conclusions. Had you heard me to the end you might have learned that there were equally strong reasons why in my present position I dare not yield to the impulse of my feelings—for that I greatly admire and respect you I frankly own. Should these reasons disappear under a change of circumstances, I shall hope to have the honour of again addressing you on this subject with a more favourable result. In the meantime, to assure you that I entertain no unfriendly recollection of this interview, permit me the honour——”

So saying, ere she was aware of his intention, he raised her hand to his lips, bowed respectfully, and rising, quitted the apartment. Miss Peyton, equally surprised and provoked at the turn De Grandeville had given to the conversation, remained for a minute or so pondering the matter, with her eyes fixed on the ground; as she raised them they encountered those of a gentleman who was passing down the room at the time. Charles Leicester (for he it was) returned her gaze haughtily, and as their eyes met a contemptuous smile curled his lip, and bowing coldly, he passed on without a word. Well might he despise her, for he had witnessed the parting salute, and not unnaturally deemed her the affianced bride of Marmaduke De Grandeville. Ere he retired for the night his servant had received orders to pack up his clothes and to procure post-horses by eight o'clock on the following morning. Annie Grant, who, when the latest guests had departed, sought her friend Laura's dressing-room to explain to her the old friendship which had existed between her cousin Charles and Lady Mary Goodwood was equally surprised and distressed to find her communication received with a hysterical burst of tears.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SUNSHINE AFTER SHOWERS.

ANNIE GRANT found her friend strangely uncommunicative on the subject of her fit of weeping; she declared that it was nothing—that she felt nervous and overtired, but that a good night's rest was all she required to set her to rights again; then kissing her affectionately, Laura, with much caressing, turned her out of the room. As sound sleep was the specific to which Miss Peyton trusted for the restoration of her health and spirits, it can scarcely be imagined that, after passing four restless hours in a vain attempt to obtain the desired boon, she should have felt particularly refreshed. Weary both in mind and body, she was aroused from a dreamy, half-sleeping, half-waking, but

wholly uncomfortable state into which she had fallen by the sun shining brightly into her room. The beauty of the morning, though a thick hoar frost lay upon the ground, banished all further desire for sleep, and commencing her toilet, she resolved on a scheme which her acquaintance with the usual habits of the family led her to conceive feasible—namely, to possess herself of the third volume of a new novel in which she was considerably interested, and with that for a companion, to take a brisk walk in the clear morning air and return ere any of the party had made their appearance at the breakfast-table. Dressing hastily, she wrapped herself in a thick shawl and tripped lightly down the staircase, only encountering in her progress a drowsy housemaid, who stared at her with lack-lustre eyes, as though she took her for a ghost. Before she could carry her whole plan into execution, however, it was necessary that she should visit the library in order to procure the volume she wished to take with her. Opening the door quickly, she had proceeded half-way across the room ere she perceived it was not untenanted. As she paused, uncertain whether or not to proceed, Charles Leicester—for he it was who, acting on his resolution of the previous night, was writing a few lines to account for his abrupt departure—rose from the table at which he had been sitting and advanced towards her. He was attired for a journey, and his pale features and the dark circles under his eyes gave token of a sleepless night. There was a restless energy in his tone and manner, as he addressed her, totally opposed to his usual listless indifference; and no one could be in his company a moment without perceiving that (to use a common but forcible expression) something had come over him—that he was (at all events, for the present) a changed man.

“You are an early riser, Miss Peyton,” he said. “I did not expect to have an opportunity of wishing you good-bye in person.”

“I was not aware you intended leaving Broadhurst so soon,” returned Laura, feeling, she scarcely knew why, exceedingly uncomfortable. “Shall you return before the party breaks up?”

“No. I shall go abroad directly, and endeavour to procure an attachéship to one of the embassies; the Turkish, I think: I’ve never seen Constantinople.”

“Surely you’ve formed this resolution somewhat abruptly,” observed Miss Peyton. “It was only yesterday you agreed to escort your cousin Annie and myself to ride over and sketch the ruins of Monkton Priory. I was thinking this morning, as soon as I saw the sunshine, what a charming canter we should have.”

“I should be more sorry, Miss Peyton, to be forced to break so agreeable an engagement, did I not feel certain *you* will have no difficulty in supplying my place on the occasion,” returned Leicester, laying a marked emphasis on the pronoun. “I must now wish you good morning,” he continued; then bowing coldly, he took up his hat and turned to leave the room.

Miss Peyton allowed him to reach the door ere she could make up her mind what course to pursue; then colouring brightly, she exclaimed, “Stay one moment, Mr. Leicester.” As he paused, and closing the door, which he had partially opened, turned towards her,

she continued, "I will not affect to misunderstand your allusion, and although the subject is one on which I should not willingly have entered, I consider it due to myself not to suffer you to depart under a mistake, into which I should have thought you knew me too well to have fallen."

"Mistake!" repeated Leicester eagerly. "Is it possible that I can be mistaken? Are you not then engaged to Mr. De Grandeville?"

"Most assuredly am I not," returned Miss Peyton, "nor, unless I very greatly alter my opinion of that gentleman, shall I ever be so. I did think Mr. Leicester would have given me credit for better taste than to have supposed such a thing possible, but I see I was mistaken; and now," she added, "having found the book I came to seek, I must wish you good morning, and—a pleasant journey to Constantinople."

"Stay, Miss Peyton," exclaimed Leicester, for once really excited; "you have said too much or too little. Pardon me," he continued, "I will not detain you five minutes, but speak I must." Taking her hand, he led her to a seat, and resumed—

"I am placed in a position equally painful and difficult, but the best and most straightforward course I can pursue will be to tell you in as few words as possible the simple truth, and then leave you to decide upon my fate. The difficulty I have to encounter is this:—You are an heiress; I, a portionless younger brother, without a profession, and brought up in expensive and indolent habits. Were I then to tell you that I love you, and that the dearest wish of my heart is to call you mine, how can I expect you to think that I am not actuated by mercenary motives? to believe that I do indeed, deeply, truly love you, with an intensity of which I scarcely could have believed my nature capable? When first I sought your society, I frankly own (and if the admission ruins my cause I cannot help it, for I will not attempt to deceive you) it was the report of your riches which attracted me. I considered you lady-like and agreeable, and this being the case, I would willingly have done as I saw men of my acquaintance do every day—married for money; but as I became intimate with you, and discovered the priceless treasures of your heart and mind, my views and feelings altered. I soon learned to love you for yourself alone, and then for the first time, when I perceived that in marrying you I had everything to gain and nothing to offer in return, I became fully aware of the meanness of the act I contemplated—in fact I saw the matter in its true light, and felt that to ask you to become my wife would be an insult rather than a compliment. Thus, the more I grew to love you, the less I ventured to show it, till at last, pride coming to my assistance, I resolved to tear myself away, and quitted Scotland abruptly, intending never to renew our intimacy, unless some unexpected stroke of fortune should enable me to do so on more equal terms. My cousin Annie, however, had it seems guessed my secret, and invited you here without mentioning her intention to me till you had actually arrived. Had I acted consistently, I should have left this place a fortnight ago; but I had suffered so much during my absence, and the delight of again associating with you was so overpowering, that I had not sufficient strength of will to carry out my

determination; thus I continued day by day yielding myself to the fascination of your society, learning to love you more and more, and yet not daring to tell you so, because I felt the impossibility of proving—even now it seems absurd to say—my disinterestedness; but that I loved you for yourself alone. Such had been for some days my state of feeling, when yesterday I was nearly driven distracted by that man, De Grandeville, actually selecting me as his confidant, and consulting me of all people in the world as to the advisability of making you an offer of marriage, hinting that he had reason to believe such a proposal would be favourably received by you."

"Insolent!" exclaimed Miss Peyton, raising her eyes for the first time during Leicester's address, and looking him full in the face. "So far from encouraging him, I have never spoken to him save to turn his pompous speeches into ridicule since I was first introduced to him."

"So I would fain have taught myself to believe yesterday," resumed Leicester; "but the coldness of your manner towards me, and the marked attention you allowed him to pay you during the evening, tortured me with doubts, and when, after an animated conversation in the music-room, I saw him raise your hand to his lips, I imagined he had put his design into execution, and was an accepted suitor."

"A rejected one would have been nearer the mark," murmured Miss Peyton.

"Utterly miserable," continued Leicester, "at the idea of having irrevocably lost you—provoked that you should have accepted a man so completely your inferior in mind, and, indeed, in every particular, I ordered post-horses before I retired for the night, and but for this accidental meeting should have been already on my road to London. And now," he continued with passionate eagerness, "it is for you to decide whether my future life is to be happy or miserable. If truth has any power of revealing itself, you will believe that I love you deeply, tenderly, for yourself alone; and you will decide whether such an affection is calculated to ensure your happiness; but if you are unable to credit my sincerity, only say the word, and I leave you for ever."

He ceased, and clenching his hands in the excess of his emotion till the nails appeared to grow into the flesh, stood before her, pale and agitated, like a criminal awaiting the sentence which shall send him forth a free man or consign him to a felon's grave. After watching her anxiously for a few moments, during which she remained without speaking, her head averted and her features concealed by her close straw bonnet, he resumed: "I see it is in vain to wait; your silence tells me that I have nothing to hope—fool that I was ever to deem it could be otherwise! Farewell, Laura; may you be as happy as I would have striven to render you."

He turned, and his hand was again on the lock of the door, when a low, sweet voice, every accent of which thrilled through his very soul, murmured—

"Mr. Leicester—Charles—do not go—you will not leave me?"

And accordingly he did *not* go, but came back instantly like an amiable, obedient young man as he was, and received the reward of

merit by learning from the lips of her he loved that she was not only convinced of the sincerity of the affection he had bestowed on her, but prized the gift so highly that she felt obliged to return it, which statement sounded very like a contradiction, but was nothing of the kind. Then followed a bright, happy half-hour, one of those little bits of unmitigated sunshine which gleam once or twice in a lifetime to thaw the ice that tears which have never found vent form more or less thickly around the heart of each of us; and ere it was over, Laura Peyton stood pledged to become the wife of Charley Leicester, who dis-ordered the post-horses and postponed his journey to Constantinople *ad infinitum*.

Several droll little scenes occurred later on that morning between various members of the party assembled at Broadhurst. In the first place, Annie Grant, who, completely tired out, and greatly concerned at the mysterious impediments which obstructed the course of her cousin Charles's love affair, had sought her pillow with a firm conviction she should never close her eyes all night, fell asleep immediately, and woke soon after nine o'clock on the following morning under the impression that she had just gone to bed. While she was dressing she resolved in her anxious mind her cousin's difficulties, and came to the following conclusions: first, that for sundry reasons connected with his natural indolence and a painful sense of his dependent position, Charley would never "tell his love;" secondly, that Laura, not divining these reasons, was piqued and hurt at his prolonged silence; and thirdly, that it behoved her (Annie) to remove these stumbling-blocks by a little judicious interference. Accordingly, when she had finished her toilet, and, giving a last parting glance at her pretty face and graceful figure in the cheval glass in her dressing-room, had thought—well, I don't know that we've any business to pry into her thoughts, but by the bright half-smile, half-blush which resulted from the inspection it may be concluded they were of an agreeable nature. When she had performed this little unconscious act of homage to her own beauty she tripped off to her friend's room, and found that young lady fastening a very dangerous little bow of ribbon around her neck, with a small turquoise brooch made in the shape of a true lover's knot. I wonder why she should have selected *it* from some twenty others on that morning in particular?

"Idle girl!" exclaimed Annie, kissing her affectionately, as if idleness were a highly commendable quality, "idle girl! not dressed at ten o'clock, and I've been ready for the last five minutes."

"I'm very sorry, dear; but if you knew what pleasant dreams I've enjoyed, you would not wish to have dispelled them," returned Laura demurely, though there was a fund of merriment gleaming in her dark eyes which Annie in her innocence did not perceive. Feeling, however, that under the circumstances her friend had no business to have been so very happy, even in her dreams, she answered somewhat pettishly—

"You have been more favoured than I have been. I went to bed cross and worried, and fretted over all my troubles again in my dreams. Laura dear," she continued, "I want to say something to

you, if I thought you would not be angry with me: I wish you—but can't you guess what I'm going to say?"

Miss Peyton shook her pretty head, and confirmed the conviction expressed by De Grandeville, that her family was of modern date, by repudiating any connection with the race of Ædipus. So poor, sensitive Annie was forced to clothe her meaning in plain and unmistakable words, which she endeavoured to do by resuming—

"My cousin Charles, dear Laura—you know we were brought up together as children, and I love him as a brother; he is so kind-hearted and such a sweet temper; and of course I am aware he makes himself rather ridiculous sometimes with his indolence and affectation, but he has been so spoiled and flattered by the set he lives in—it is only manner—whenever he is really called upon to act, you have no notion what good sense and right feeling he displays. Dear Laura, I can't bear to see him so unhappy!"

At the beginning of this speech Miss Peyton coloured slightly; as it proceeded her eyes sparkled, and any one less occupied with their own feelings than was Annie Grant might have observed that tears glistened in them; but at its conclusion she observed in her usual quiet tone—

"I don't believe Mr. Leicester is unhappy."

"Ah! you don't know him as well as I do," returned Annie, her cheeks glowing and her eyes beaming with the interest she took in the subject; "he was so wretched all yesterday evening; he ate no supper, and sat moping in corners, as unlike his natural, happy self as possible."

"Did you hear that he had ordered post-horses at eight o'clock this morning?" inquired Laura.

"No! you don't mean it!" exclaimed Annie, clasping her hands in dismay. "Oh, I hope he is not gone!"

"You may depend upon it he is," rejoined Miss Peyton, turning to the glass avowedly to smooth her glossy hair, which did not in the slightest degree require that process, but in reality to hide a smile. "He must be on his way to town by this time, *unless* anything has occurred this morning to cause him to alter his determination."

"That is impossible," returned Annie quickly; then adding in a tone of the deepest reproach, "Oh, Laura! how could you be so cruel as to let him go?" she burst into a flood of tears. And Laura, that heartless young hyæna of fashionable life, that savage specimen of the perfidious sex of whom a poet sings—

"Woman, though so mild she seem,
Will take your heart and tantalise it;
Were it made of Portland stone,
She'd manage to Macadamise it"—

what do you suppose she did on the occasion? Nothing wonderful, and yet the best thing she could, for she wreathed her soft arms round Annie's neck, and kissing away her tears, whispered in a few simple touching words the secret of her happy love.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BROTHERLY LOVE "À LA MODE."

NOW let us shake the kaleidoscope and take a peep at another combination of our *dramatis personæ* at this particular phase of their destinies. Lord Bellefield is breakfasting in his private sitting-room; a bright fire blazes on the hearth; close to it has been drawn a sofa, upon which, wrapped in a dressing-gown of rich brocaded silk, lounges the tenant of the apartment; a breakfast-table stands by the sofa, on which are placed an empty coffee cup, a small flask of French brandy, and a liqueur glass, together with a plate of toast apparently scarcely touched, a cut-glass saucer containing marmalade, and a cigar-case. His lordship appears to be by no means in an amiable frame of mind. He had sat up the previous night some two hours after the ball was over, playing *Ecarté* with certain intimates of his own, whom he had caused to be invited to Broadhurst, during which time he had contrived to lose between £200 and £300. Earlier in the past day he had formed a canvassing engagement with General Grant for eleven o'clock on the following morning, which had obliged him to rise sooner than was by any means agreeable to his tastes, or consonant with his usual habits; and lastly, he expected an important letter, and the post was late. While he was pondering this agglomerate (to choose a euphonious word) of small evils, the door opened noiselessly, and Antoine, the French valet, carrying a well-brushed coat as tenderly as if it had been a baby, stole on tiptoe across the room. Lord Bellefield, whose head was turned away from the door, stretched out his hand, exclaiming impatiently, "Well, where are they?"

"*Milor!*" returned the astonished Frenchman, who in his interest about the coat had forgotten the letters.

"The letters, fool, where are they?" reiterated his lordship angrily.

"*Mille pardons, Milor;* but ven I did valk myself up zie stair, I am not avare dat zie lettairs had made zemselves to arrive," rejoined Antoine with a self-satisfied smile, as if he had said something clever.

"Did you ask?" returned his master with a frown.

"*Non pas précisément*—I did not exactly demand," stammered Antoine with (this time) a deprecatory smile.

Lord Bellefield's only reply was an oath; then, seeing the man remained, uncertain what to do, he added—

"Go down again directly, idiot, and don't return without my letters, unless—" a menacing gesture of his clenched fist supplied the blank, and the valet quitted the room, muttering with a shrug as he closed the door, "*Qu'ils sont barbares, ces Anglais;* but, *parbleu,* like all zie savage, dey are made of gold—*eh! bien, c'est égal,*—he shall pay me vell for him."

Lord Bellefield was not fated to enjoy the blessing of peace that morning, for scarcely had his servant closed the door ere some one else tapped at it. "Come in," shouted the victimised peer, appending

a wish concerning his visitor, of which the most charitable view we can take is that he was desirous of offering him a warm reception. However this may be, Charles Leicester (for he it was to whose lot his brother's left-handed benediction had fallen) entered the room, his face reflecting the joy of his heart, and drawing a chair to the opposite side of the fire-place, seated himself thereupon, and began rubbing his hands with a degree of energy totally opposed to his usual listless indifference.

"Is there no other fire in the house that you are necessitated to come and warm your hands here, Mr. Leicester? I fancied you were aware that if there is one thing in the world which annoys me more than another, it is to be intruded on in a morning," observed his lordship pettishly. Then, for the first time catching sight of his brother's face, he continued, "What on earth are you looking so absurdly happy about?"

"Now, don't growl this morning, Belle; be a little bit like a brother for once in your life. I'm come to receive your congratulations," returned Leicester.

"Has your Jewish money-lender turned Christian and burned his books, like the magicians of old?" inquired Bellefield sarcastically.

"Something almost as wonderful," replied his brother, "for I live in good hopes of paying him."

"Why, you don't mean to say my father is going to be such a confounded fool as to pay your debts?" continued Bellefield, springing up in the excitement of the moment. "I swear I'll not allow it; he'll burden the estates so that when I come into the title I shall be a beggar."

"Keep yourself cool, my good brother; you might be sure I should never in my wildest moments dream of asking you to congratulate me on any good fortune which could by the most remote contingency either affect your interests or interfere with your ease and comfort," replied Leicester, for once provoked to say a cutting thing by his brother's intense selfishness.

"Really, Charles, I'm in no humour for foolery or impertinence," said Lord Bellefield snappishly. "If there's anything you wish me to know, tell it at once; if not, I am expecting important letters, and should be glad to be alone."

"What should you say if you heard I was going to be hanged, Belle?" asked Charley.

"Wish you joy of your exalted destiny, and think things might have been worse," was the answer.

"Apply both the wish and reflection to the present emergency," returned Leicester, "for I'm in nearly as sad a case—I'm going to be married."

"On the principle that what is not enough to keep one can support two, I suppose!" rejoined Lord Bellefield in a tone of the most bitter contempt. "Well, I did *not* think—but I wash my hands of the affair entirely. Only mind this—the property is strictly entailed, my father can do nothing without my consent, and if you expect that you're to be supported in idleness at our expense——"

"My dear fellow, I expect nothing of the kind," returned Charley, caressing his whiskers. "My wife and I mean to set up a cigar divan, and all we shall look for from you is your custom; we certainly do hope to make a decent living out of that."

Lord Bellefield uttered an exclamation expressive of disgust, and then inquired abruptly—

"Well, who is the woman?"

"She isn't exactly a woman," returned Charley meekly; "that is, of course, speaking literally and in a physiological point of view she is a woman, but in the language of civilised society she is something more than a mere woman—for instance, by birth she is a lady. Nature has bestowed on her that somewhat unusual feminine attribute, a mind, to which art, through the medium of the various educational sciences, has added cultivation; then she has the sweetest, most lovable disposition——"

"There! spare me your lovers' raptures," returned Lord Bellefield; "of all stale trash they are the most sickening; and tell me plainly, in five words, who she *is*, and what she *has*."

"Laura Peyton—heiress—value unknown," returned Leicester emphatically and concisely.

"Miss Peyton!" exclaimed Lord Bellefield in surprise. "My dear Charles," he continued in a more cordial tone than he had yet used, "do you really mean that you're engaged to Laura Peyton? Why, she is said to have between four and five thousand a year in the funds, besides a princely estate in ——shire. Are you in earnest?"

"Never was so much so about anything before in my life," returned Leicester. "If I don't marry Laura Peyton, and that very soon too, I shall do something so desperate that society had better shut up shop at once, for it's safe to be 'uprooted from its very foundations,' as the conservative papers say if a poor devil of a chartist happens to strop his razor before committing the 'overt act' by which he cuts his own throat."

"'Pon my word," exclaimed Lord Bellefield, as he became convinced that his brother was really in earnest, "'pon my word, you've played your cards deucedly well. I declare, if I hadn't been booked for little Annie here, I wouldn't have minded marrying the girl myself. Why, Charley, you'll actually become a creditable member of society."

As he spoke a tap was heard at the door, and Antoine made his appearance, breathless with the haste in which he had run upstairs.

"*Enfin elles sont arrivées,*" he exclaimed, handing the letters on a silver waiter; "why for zey vos *si tard*, zie postman, he did slip up on von vot you call—(ah! *qu'ils sont difficiles, ces sacrés mots Anglais*)—slid? *oui! oui!* he did slip himself up on von slid, and tumbled into two ditches."

Lord Bellefield seized the letters eagerly. Signing to the valet to leave the room, without heeding his lucid explanation of the delay, he selected one in a particular handwriting, and tearing it open, hastily perused the first few lines; then rubbing his hands, he exclaimed with an oath, "By ——! Beppo's won, and I'm a clear £12,000 in pocket.

Charley, boy," he continued, with a sudden impulse of generosity (for no one is all bad), "how much are your debts?"

"I believe about £2000 would cover them," returned Leicester.

"Then I'll clear you, old fellow," replied Lord Bellefield, clapping him on the shoulder, "and you shall marry your rich bride a free man."

"My dear Bellefield, I can't allow it—you are too kind—I—I really don't know how to thank you—I can't think what's come to everybody this morning," cried poor Charley, as, fairly overpowered by his good fortune, he seized Lord Bellefield's hand and wrung it warmly. At that moment those two men, each warped and hardened differently, as their dispositions differed, by the world's evil influence, felt more as brothers should feel towards each other than they had done since they played together years ago as little children at their mother's knee. With one the kindly feeling thus revived was never again entirely forgotten; with the other—but we will not anticipate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEGINS ABRUPTLY AND ENDS UNCOMFORTABLY.

"WELL, what is it? for I can see by your eyes that you have something you wish to ask me, Walter," observed Lewis, as his pupil stood before him nervously moving his feet and twisting the lash of a dog-whip round his hands.

"Only Millar wanted—that is, he didn't want, but he said he would take me out with him to see him shoot those great pretty birds."

"Pheasants," suggested Lewis.

"Yes, to see him shoot pheasants," continued Walter, "if you would let me go. Millar says," he added, seeing that Lewis appeared doubtful, "Millar says all real gentlemen like shooting, and that I'm quite old enough to learn."

One great change wrought in Walter since he had been under Lewis's direction—a change from which his tutor augured the most favourable results—was the almost total disappearance of those fits of morbid despondency and indifference to external objects, at times almost amounting to unconscious imbecility, to which he had formerly been subject; it was therefore a part of Lewis's system to encourage him to follow up vigorously any pursuit for which he evinced the slightest predilection; indeed, so effectual a means did he consider this of arousing his faculties, that he often sacrificed to it the daily routine of mechanical teaching. Having, therefore, run over in his mind the pros and cons, and decided that if he accompanied his pupil no danger could accrue, he graciously gave his consent, and having encased his feet in a stout pair of boots, and seen that Walter followed his example, both master and pupil hastened to the stable-yard to join the worthy individual with whom the expedition had originated.

Millar, who, as the reader has probably ere this divined, was none other than General Grant's head gamekeeper, appeared anxious to be off without delay, as he had received orders to kill a certain amount of game which was required for a forthcoming dinner-party. The morning was, as we have already said, lovely, and Lewis enjoyed the brisk walk through some of the most wild and picturesque scenery the country afforded with a degree of zest at which he was himself surprised. The pheasants, however, not being endowed with such supernornithological resignation as certain water-fowl, who, when required for culinary purposes were invited, as the nursery rhyme relates, to their own executions by the unalluring couplet,

"Dilly dilly dilly ducks, come and be killed!"

appeared singularly unwilling to face death at that particular epoch, and contrived accordingly by some means or other to render themselves invisible. In vain did Millar try the choicest spinnies, in vain did he scramble through impassable hedges, where gaps there were none, rendering himself a very pin-cushion for thorns; in vain did he creep along what he was pleased to term dry ditches, till from the waist downwards he looked more like a geological specimen than a leather-gaitered and corduroyed Christian; still the obdurate pheasants refused to stand fire, either present or prospective (gun or kitchen), and at the end of three hours' hard walking through the best preserves the disconsolate gamekeeper had only succeeded in bagging a brace. At length completely disheartened, he came to anchor on a stile, and produced a flask of spirits, with the contents of which (after fruitlessly pressing Lewis and Walter to partake thereof) he proceeded to regale himself. Finding himself the better for this prescription, he shouted to a dishevelled individual yclept the beater, who for the trifling consideration of eighteenpence per diem and a meal of broken victuals, delivered himself over to the agreeable certainty of being wet to the skin, and scratched and torn *through* it, with the by no means remote contingency of getting accidentally shot into the bargain. The creature who appeared in answer to this summons, and who in spite of the uncomfortable description we have given of his occupation, seemed to enjoy his day's sport excessively, was too old for a boy and too young for a man. His face was, of course, scratched and bleeding, and his elf locks, drenched with the hoar frost, now melted into a species of half-frozen gelatine, gave him a strange, unearthly appearance. His clothing, if rags which looked like the cast-off garments of an indigent scarecrow deserved the name, was so tattered and torn, that the fact of their hanging upon him at all was calculated to shake one's faith in the Newtonian theory of gravitation, till one gained a clue to the mystery by recollecting the antagonistic principle "attraction of cohesion;" the only personal attraction, by the way (save a pair of clear grey eyes giving a shrewd expression to his face), that our friend possessed.

"Villiam," began his superior—and here let it be remarked parenthetically that it was the custom of this excellent gamekeeper invariably to address his satellite for the time being as "Villiam,"

utterly disregarding the occasional fact that the sponsors of the youth had seen fit to call him otherwise—"Villiam," observed Mr. Millar, "you're vet." This being an incontrovertible certainty, evident to the meanest capacity, "Villiam" did not feel called upon to reply in words, merely shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog for the benefit of the bystanders, and glancing wistfully at the flask. "Yer vet right thro' yer, Villiam," resumed his employer dogmatically; "so shove a drop o' this here down yer throat, and make spurrits and vater of yerself."

To this proposition "Villiam" replied by stretching out his hand, grasping the flask eagerly, then tugging at a tangled lock of hair on his forehead as a salutation to the assembled company, and growling out in a hoarse, damp voice, "Here's wushin' hall yer 'ealths," he proceeded to "do his spiriting," though by no means as "gently" as the delicate Ariel was accustomed to perform that operation. Having thus qualified his cold-water system by the introduction of alcohol, the spirit moved him and he spake.

"Yer ain't bagged much game, Master, this mornin', I reckon?"

"Not I," was the reply; "no man can't shoot things as ain't wisibul, yer know, Villiam. I can't think vot's got all the game."

"They do tell I as pheasands as looks wery like ourn goes to Lunnun in t'carrier's cart twice a veek," observed "Villiam" in a dreamy, absent kind of manner, as if the remark were totally foreign to the subject under discussion.

"Ah! that's vot yer hear, is it, Villiam?" returned Millar carelessly. "Hif that's the case, I suppose (for 'tain't likely they walks there of themselves) somebody must take 'em?"

"That *is* right, Master," was the rejoinder.

"Has it hever cum across yer—take another drop of spurrits, Villiam; yer vet—has it hever cum across yer who that somebody his?" demanded Millar in an easy, careless tone of voice.

"His it true as ther General thinks o' puttin' hon a second hunder-keeper?" rejoined "Villiam," replying, like an Irish echo, by another question.

"Hi'm avake, Villiam," returned his patron with an encouraging wink, "it certingly his possibul hif I vas to tell ther General that I knowed a quick, hintelligent lad has might be wery useful in *catchin' poarchers*—yer understand, Villiam—sich a thing might cum about."

"In that case hi'm free to mention that hi see three coves a cummin' hout o' Todshole Spinney with a sack as vosn't haltogither hempty, atween three and four o'clock this here blessed mornin'."

"And vot might yer be a' doin' yerself, hout o' bed at that time o' night, Villiam?" inquired Millar suspiciously.

"A lying in a dry ditch with my heyes open," returned the imp significantly.

"I sees!" rejoined the keeper reflectively. "Yer didn't happen haccidentally to know any o' they three coves, Villiam, I suppose?"

"Ther von has carried the sack worn't haltogither unlike long Hardy, the blacksmith," was the reply.

The worthy Mr. Millar meditated for some minutes in silence on

the information thus acquired; then rousing himself with a sudden start, he observed, "Now, Villiam, hif you'll be so hobliging has to beat along that ere 'edgerow to the right, ve'll see hif ve can knock hover another brace o' longtails, and ve can talk about Mr. Hardy ven ve have finished our day's york. There's a precious young limb o' vickedness," he added, turning to Lewis as the boy got out of earshot, "he's von hof 'em, bless yer, only he's turned again 'em with a mercenary view hof getting a hunder-keeper's sitivation."

"In which rascality do you mean to allow him to succeed?" asked Lewis.

"Not by no manner o' means—halways supposing I can pump him dry without," was the prudent reply; and shouldering his double-barrel the gamekeeper quitted his perch on the stile and resumed his shooting.

Whether the intelligence he had received had affected his nervous system (reserving for future discussion the more doubtful question of his possessing such an aristocratic organisation), or whether in the excitement of the moment he had allowed himself to imbibe an unusually liberal allowance of the contents of the spirit-flask, we do not pretend to decide; but certain it is that he missed consecutively two as fair shots as ever presented themselves to the gun of a sportsman, and ended by wounding, without bringing down, a young hen pheasant, despite the warning cry of "'ware hen" from the perfidious "Villiam," then located in a quagmire.

"Vell, I never did!" exclaimed the unfortunate perpetrator of this the greatest crime which in a gamekeeper's opinion a sportsman can commit; "I 'aven't done sich a think has that since I was a boy o' thirteen year old, and father quilted me with the dog-whip for it, and sarve me right, too. This here's a werry snipey bit, too," he continued dejectedly; "but hif I can't 'it a pheasand, hit's useless to 'old up my gun hat a snipe."

"Your ill-luck in the morning has made you impatient and spoiled your shooting," observed Lewis, wishing good-naturedly to propitiate his companion.

This speech, however, seemed to produce just a contrary effect, for Millar answered gruffly, "Perhaps, Mister, you fancies as you can do better yourself; hif so, you're velcome to take the gun and try."

"I've no objection," replied Lewis, smiling at the very evident contempt in which, as a "Lunnuner," his companion held him; "I'll try a shot or two, if you like."

"Here you are, then, sir," was the reply, as the keeper handed him the gun; "the right barrel's shotted for pheasands, and the left for snipes; so look hout, and if yer don't bag Villiam, or Master Valter here, hit'll be a mercy, I expects."

If the unfortunate Millar hoped to console himself for his own failure by witnessing a similar *mishap* on the part of the young tutor, he was once more doomed to be disappointed; for scarcely had Lewis taken possession of the gun when a splendid cock-pheasant rose within distance, though farther off than either of the shots the

keeper had just missed, and, ere its gaudy plumage had well caught the rays of the sun above the tops of the young plantation, fell to the ground, quivering in the agonies of death. As the smoke from the discharge cleared away, a snipe, scared alike by the report of the gun and the approach of the beater, sprang from a thick clump of alder bushes and darted away, uttering its peculiar cry.

"No use—hit's clean out o' shot," exclaimed Millar, as Lewis, swift as thought, again raised the gun to his shoulder. Slightly piqued by the keeper's contemptuous manner, he determined not to throw away a chance of vindicating his skill as a marksman, and though he felt by no means sure of success, on the "nothing venture nothing have" principle, the instant he got a clear sight of the bird he blazed away at it. Great then was his delight to perceive the snipe suddenly tower upwards and then drop to the ground, as if struck by lightning.

"Vel, if that hain't a clever shot!" ejaculated Millar, surprised into admiration in spite of himself; "bless'd if yer 'aven't tuk the shine hout of me properly. I thort yer vos a reg'lar green un, but I'm free to confess I couldn't 'ave killed that ere bird at that distance ther best o' times."

"Nor have I, it seems," exclaimed Lewis, as the snipe, which was only wounded, rose, flew a short distance, and dropped again.

"Hit's dead this time, I'll bet a quart," observed Millar; "hit'll never git hup no more, hif ve can honly find it."

"I think I can," said Lewis; "I marked the exact spot where it fell. Walter, do you stay with Millar till I come back. I should not like to lose it."

So saying, Lewis, completely carried away by the excitement of the sport, returned the gun to its owner, and dashing the branches aside, bounded forward, and was soon hidden amongst the trees, as he forced his way through the dense underwood towards the spot where he trusted to find the snipe. With some difficulty, and after much energetic scrambling, Lewis reached the place where he had seen the bird fall, but even then it was no such easy matter to find it, nor was it till he had nearly decided that he must relinquish the search that he discovered his victim caught in a forked branch, and perfectly dead. Having secured his prize, the next object was to rejoin his companions, and this accordingly he endeavoured to accomplish without delay; but since the days of pious Æneas the task of retracing our steps, the *revocare gradus*, has been a work of difficulty, more especially if we have begun by taking a few in a wrong direction, and Lewis's case proved no exception to the rule. After one or two wrong turns he became completely bewildered, and feeling sure that he should never discover his right course while surrounded by the thick underwood, he struck into the first path which presented itself, and following its windings, found himself, almost immediately, close to the hedge which separated that side of the plantation from a grass-field beyond. As he made his way towards a gap in this hedge his attention was attracted by the sound of voices, and on approaching the spot he perceived two persons engaged in earnest conversation.

They were a man and a girl, the former, who wore the dress of a gentleman, having his arm round his companion's waist. The interview seemed, however, about to terminate, for as Lewis paused, uncertain whether or not to make himself known to the lovers (for such he conjectured them to be), the gentleman stooped, imprinted a kiss on the damsel's brow, then saying, "Remember, you have promised!" loosed the bridle of a horse which was fastened to the branch of a tree, sprang into the saddle, and rode hastily away. Not, however, before Lewis had recognised the features of Lord Bellefield.

Surprise at this discovery was the first feeling of which Lewis was conscious, then a sudden desire seized him to ascertain who the girl could be, and without waiting to reflect on what further course it might be advisable for him to pursue, he crossed the gap, sprang over the ditch beyond, and presented himself before her. With a violent start and a slight scream at this sudden apparition, the girl raised her head, disclosing to Lewis the intelligent face and earnest eyes of the young female who had accosted him on the previous evening immediately after the affair of the glove had taken place. Lewis was the first to speak.

"I have startled you, I fear," he began. "I quitted my companions to go in search of a snipe I had just shot, and becoming bewildered in the wood, have contrived to miss them. Hearing voices in this direction, I jumped over the hedge, hoping I should find some one who could tell me how to retrace my steps."

"Were you in the hazel walk when you left your party, sir?" inquired the girl in a voice which faltered from various conflicting emotions.

Lewis answered in the affirmative, and she continued—

"Then, if you go straight on till you come to the corner of the field you will see a gate on your left hand; get over that and follow the road which leads into the wood, and it will bring you to your friends."

Lewis thanked her, and then stood a moment, irresolute whether or not to allude to the parting he had just witnessed. It was no affair of his, and yet could he answer it to his conscience not to warn her against the designs which, he did not doubt, Lord Bellefield entertained against her?

"Do not think me interfering without reason," he observed, "but I was an involuntary witness to your parting with that gentleman, and I wish to ask you if you are acquainted with his name and position?"

The girl cast down her eyes, and after a pause, murmured that she knew he was very rich.

"And his name?" urged Lewis.

"Mr. Leicester, brother to the young Lord," she believed.

"He has told you that, has he?" returned Lewis sternly; "and did it not occur to you to inquire of the servants last night whether your wealthy admirer had revealed to you his real name?"

"No; she had never doubted that he had done so."



MAKING GAME OF A FELLOW.

"And perhaps were unwilling to call attention to your connection with him by making the inquiry?" resumed Lewis.

A bright blush proved that he had hit upon the truth; but the probing nature of his questions roused the girl's spirit, and raising her eyes, she looked him full in the face as she in her turn inquired—

"And pray, sir, who are you? and what right have you to question me in this way?"

"My name is Lewis Arundel; I reside at Broadhurst, as tutor to Sir Walter Desborough," was the reply; "and my right to ask you these questions is the right every man possesses to do his best to counteract the designs of a heartless libertine; for such I take your friend to be, and now I will give you my reasons for thinking him so. In the first place, he has not told you his true name: he is not Lord Bellefield's brother, as he pretends, but Lord Bellefield himself; and in the second place, at the very moment when he is making professions of affection here to you, he is engaged to be married to his cousin, the daughter of General Grant."

"It is not true, you hate him," exclaimed the girl with flashing eyes. "You quarrelled with him last night, and now you seek to revenge yourself by sowing dissension between him and me, but you shall not succeed. I see through your meanness, and despise you for it."

"Girl, you are infatuated," returned Lewis angrily, "and must reap the fruits of your obstinate folly. I spoke only for your good, and told you the simple truth. If you choose to disbelieve me, the sin will lie at your door, and not mine."

As he spoke he turned and left her. By the time he reached the gate into the wood his conscience began to reproach him for having been too hasty. He looked back to see if the girl were still there; she had not moved from the spot where he had quitted her, but stood motionless, apparently buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly observing that his eyes were directed towards her, she started, and drawing her shawl closer around her, hurried away in an opposite direction. Lewis watched her retreating figure till it became no longer visible; then getting over the gate, he walked leisurely along the turfed road to rejoin his companions. He was no coward, far from it; but had he known that at that moment a gun-barrel covered him, levelled by the stalwart arm and keen eye of one before whose unerring aim by the broad light of day, or beneath the cold rays of the moon, hare, pheasant, or partridge fell like leaves in autumn—one who, hiding from the gaze of men, had witnessed his parting from the girl not five minutes since,—had he known the deep interest felt for her by this person, and how, his suspicions being aroused, he had watched day after day to discover the features of her clandestine suitor, but had never succeeded, till, creeping through the bushes, he had accidentally come up at the moment when Lewis, having spoken eagerly to her, turned and left the spot,—had he known the struggle between the good and evil principle in that man's heart, a struggle on the result of which depended life or death,—had he known all this, Lewis Arundel, though a brave man, would scarcely have paced that greenwood alley with a pulse so calm, a brow so unruffled and serene.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DE GRANDEVILLE MEETS HIS MATCH.

UNPLEASANT as was the situation in which Lewis was left at the end of the last chapter, we can scarcely imagine that any of our readers, however they may be accustomed to look on the "night side of nature," can have coolly made up their minds to the worst, and settled to their own dissatisfaction that he fell a victim to the poacher's gun. We say we cannot imagine such a possibility; not because we have any very deep reliance on the tender-heartedness of all our fellow-creatures, seeing that this tale may fall into the hands of a poor-law guardian or a political economist; that a butcher may read it fresh from the shambles, or a barrister after defending some confessed murderer. But we feel certain, butcher or barrister, law-giver or guardian must alike perceive that, as we are writing the life and adventures of Lewis Arundel, we cannot commit manslaughter without adding thereunto suicide; or, to speak plainly, we cannot kill Lewis without docking our own tale; therefore, the utmost extent for which our most truculent reader can possibly hope must be a severe gun-shot wound, entailing a lingering illness and a shattered constitution. But even these pleasant and reasonable expectations are doomed to meet with disappointment, the fact being that almost at the moment in which "long Hardy" (for he it was) levelled his gun at Lewis's retreating figure, his quick ear had caught a sound betokening the advance of some person through the bushes in his immediate vicinity; and neither wishing to encounter any of the gamekeeper's satellites, nor considering the deed he had meditated exactly calculated to be performed before any, even the most select audience, the poacher slowly recovered his gun and proceeded to convey himself away, after a singular snake-like fashion of his own, reserving to himself the right of shooting his supposed enemy at some more convenient season. In the meantime Lewis walked quietly on, unconscious of the danger he had escaped, until a turn in the road brought him in sight of his companions. During the course of their homeward walk Lewis questioned the gamekeeper as to his intentions concerning the poachers to whose proceedings he had that morning gained a clue.

"Vell, yer see, Mr. Arundel," returned Millar, in whose estimation Lewis had risen fifty per cent. since his clever shot at the snipe, "yer see, it ain't ther fust time as this chap Hardy has give us a good deal o' trouble: we caught him a poarchin' about three year ago, and he wor in — gaol for six months at a stretch. Vell, ven he cum out, he tuk to bad courses altogether—jined ther chartists, them chaps as preaches equalerty, 'cos, being at the very bottom of ther ladder themselves, equalerty would pull them hup and their betters down; vunce let 'em get to ther middle round, and they'd soon give up equalerty—hit would be the 'haristocracy of talent,' or ther 'shupremacy of physic-all force' (vich means, adwisability of pitching into

somebody else) with 'em then. I hates such cant as I hates varmint, so I do."

Having delivered himself of this opinion with much emphasis, the keeper proceeded to relieve his mind by flogging an inoffensive dog for an imaginary offence ere he continued—

"Vell, arter he jined the chartists he vent to Lunnun as a Delicate, as they calls 'em; and has they found him in wittles and drink, lodgin' and hother parquisites, in course he worn't in no hurry to cum back; howsomdever, I suppose at last they diskivered what I could a told 'em at furst—that he wasn't worth his keep; and so they packed him off home agen. I 'spected when I heard he vas arrived vot he'd be hup to. He calls hissself a blacksmith, but he drives more shots into 'ares and pheasands than nails into 'orses' 'oofs, *you may depend.*"

"And how do you propose to put a stop to his depredations?" inquired Lewis.

"Vy, I should like to catch him in the very act—nab him with the game upon him," returned the keeper meditatively; "then ve could get him another six months. But he's precious sly, and uncommon swift of foot too, though he ain't fur hoff my age, vich shall never see five-and-forty no more."

"I wish, Millar," said Lewis, after a moment's consideration, "I wish that whenever you receive information which you think likely to lead to this man's capture, you'd send me word; there's nothing I should like better than to lend you a hand in taking him. I might be useful to you, for I am considered a fast runner."

"And suppose it comes to blows? Them poarching chaps is rough customers to handle sometimes," rejoined Millar, with a cunning twinkle in his eye, as if he expected this information would alter his companion's intentions.

"So much the more exciting," returned Lewis eagerly; "an affray with poachers would be a real treat after such a life of inaction as I've been leading lately."

As he spoke—throwing off for a moment the cold reserve which had now become habitual to him—his eyes flashed, he drew himself up to his full height, and flung back his graceful head with an air of proud defiance. The gamekeeper regarded him fixedly, and mentally compared him with, not the fighting gladiator, for Millar's unclassical education had never rendered him acquainted with that illustrious statue, but he had once been present at a prize-fight, in which a tall, athletic youth, rejoicing in the ornithological sobriquet of "the spicy Dabchick," proved victor, and to that dabchick did he assimilate Lewis. At length his thoughts found vent in the following ejaculation—

"Vell, Mr. Arundel, hif ther's many more like you hup there, that blessed Lunnun can't be as bad a place as I thought it."

Lewis smiled. Perhaps (for, after all, he was human and under twenty-one) the evident admiration which had replaced the no less evident contempt with which the sturdy gamekeeper had regarded him earlier in their acquaintance was not without its charm; at all events, when, after another hour's shooting, Millar went home to

dinner, and Lewis and Walter returned to Broadhurst, the young tutor diminished his income to the extent of half-a-crown, and the keeper, as he pocketed the "tip," renewed his assurance that he would send Mr. Arundel timely notice "whenever there was a chance of being down upon that poarching willain, Hardy."

Charley Leicester, as he did not start for Constantinople, found himself at liberty to escort Laura Peyton and his cousin Annie to view the ruins of Monkton Priory, which in themselves were quite worth the trouble of a ride; had they, however, been even a less interesting combination of bricks and mortar than the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square (supposing such a thing possible), it would not have signified to the party who then visited them. Never were three individuals less inclined to be critical, or more thoroughly determined to be pleased with everything. The old grey ruins, frowning beneath the clear wintry sky, appeared the colour of strawberry ice to them; every object reflected the rose-tint of their happiness. As for Charley, a change had come o'er him. The indolent, fastidious man of fashion, whose spotless gloves and irreproachable boots were the envy and admiration of Bond Street, had disappeared, and in his place arose an honest, genuine, light-hearted, agreeable, sensible being, to whom nothing seemed to come amiss, and who appeared endowed with a preternatural power of diffusing his own superabundant happiness amongst all who came in contact with him. The girth of his saddle broke; they had no groom with them. "Grooms were such a bore, he would be groom," Charley had said; consequently there were no means at hand by which the injury could be repaired.

"Well, never mind; he would get some string at the first cottage and tie it up; he was rather glad it had happened, riding without a girth was great fun."

But Laura's horse stumbled, and Charley, forgetting his precarious seat, dashed in the spurs, intending to spring forward to her assistance. The horse *did* spring forward, but the saddle turned round. Mr. Leicester was, however, fated that day to fall on his legs, literally as well as metaphorically, and beyond being splashed up to his knees by alighting on a spot where the sun had thawed the ice into a puddle, he sustained no further injury. Laura was frightened; he must not mount again till he had been able to get the girth mended.

"Very well," returned Charley; "he would lead the horse then; it was pleasanter to walk than to ride such a cold day as that; he liked it particularly."

So he marched sturdily through mud and mire, leading his own horse and resting his hand on the mane of the animal ridden by Laura, for the space of some five miles, laughing and talking all the time so agreeably that the young lady came to the conclusion that she had never properly appreciated his powers of conversation till that moment. Altogether, despite the broken girth and the mud and the cold, to say nothing of a slight snowstorm which overtook them ere they reached home, each member of that little party felt mentally

convinced that they had never before enjoyed a ride so much in all their lives.

"Arundel, where are you?" exclaimed Leicester, putting his head into the study as he passed the door on his way to his apartment. "Can you spare me five minutes' conversation?" he continued, as Lewis, closing a book, rose to receive him.

"Certainly," was the reply; "pray come in."

"I've been wishing to see you all day," resumed Leicester, carefully shutting the door and glancing round the room. "Where is your charge?"

"He is with the General," was the reply. "He likes to have him for half-an-hour every day before he goes to dress; he talks to him, and tries to instil into his mind correct notions regarding things in general, and his own future social position in particular. Walter sits still and listens, but I'm afraid he does not understand much about it."

"No great loss either, I've a notion," returned Charley irreverently. He paused, whistled a few bars of "Son Geloso," entangled his spur in the hearthrug, extricated it with much difficulty, then turning abruptly to Lewis, he exclaimed, "Arundel, I'm no hand at making fine speeches, but recollect if ever you want a friend I owe you more than I can possibly repay you. Not that this is such a very uncommon relation for me to stand in towards people," he added with a smile.

"Nay," returned Lewis, "you are reversing our positions: I am your debtor for my introduction to this family, and for an amount of kindness and consideration which you must be placed, like myself, in a dependent situation fully to appreciate. But," he added, glancing at his friend's happy face, "I hope you have some good news to tell me?"

"You are right in your conjecture," replied Leicester, "but it is mainly owing to your straightforward and sensible advice that I have gained the prize I strove for. I was within an ace of losing it, though;" and he then gave a hasty outline of his day's adventures, with which the reader has been already made acquainted.

Lewis congratulated him warmly on his good fortune. "You see I was right when I told you Miss Peyton was not so indifferent to you as you imagined," he said, "and that she liked you, not because you were a man of fashion, the admired of all admirers, but because she had sufficient penetration to discover that you were something more—that you possessed higher and better qualities, and were not——"

"Go on, my dear Arundel," urged Leicester as Lewis paused, "go on. I like plain speaking when it comes from a friendly mouth."

"The mere butterfly you strove to appear, I was going to say," resumed Lewis; "but you will think me strangely impertinent."

"Not at all," returned Leicester, "it's the truth; I can see it plainly now. I've taken as much trouble to make myself appear a fool as other men do to gain a reputation for wisdom. Well, it's never too late to mend. I shall turn over a new leaf from this time forth, give up dress, restrict myself to one cigar a day, moderate my affection for pale ale, invest capital in worsted gloves and a cotton umbrella, and become a regular business character." He paused, and drawing a

chair to the fire, seated himself, and stretching out his legs, subjected his boots, which bore unmistakable traces of his pedestrian episode, to the influence of the blazing wood. Having thus made himself comfortable, he fell into a fit of musing which lasted till, after gazing vacantly at his extended legs for some moments, his features suddenly assumed an eager expression, and he exclaimed, "Confound those blockheads, Schneider & Shears: I suppose if I've told them once I've told them fifty times to give more room in the leg for riding-trousers. A horse's back is a wide thing, and of course when you stretch your legs across it you require the trousers to fit sufficiently loosely to accommodate themselves to the position; they need not set like a couple of hop sacks either; the thing's simple enough. I know if I'd a pair of scissors I could cut them out myself."

Glancing at Lewis as he spoke, Leicester perceived that he was struggling, not over successfully, to preserve his gravity, and the absurdity of the thing striking him for the first time, he indulged in a hearty laugh at his own expense ere he added, "Heigh-ho! it's not so easy to get rid of old habits as one imagines. I see it will take me longer to unpuppyise myself than I was aware of. Seriously, however, I don't mean to continue a mere idler, living on my wife's fortune. My father has interest with Government, and I shall ask him to push it and obtain for me some creditable appointment or other. He will have no difficulty; the Hon. Charles Leicester, husband to the rich Miss Peyton, will possess much stronger claims upon his country than Charley Leicester the portionless younger son. In this age of humbug it is easy enough to get a thing if you don't care whether you have it or not; but if you chance to be some poor wretch, to whom the obtaining it is life or death, ten to one but you are done out of it. Poverty is the only unpardonable sin in these days; the worship of the golden calf is a species of idolatry to which Christians are prone as well as Jews. It's rare to find a sceptic as to that religion, even amongst the most inveterate unbelievers."

Lewis, to whom Leicester in his self-engrossment had not perceived that his remarks would apply, bit his lip and coloured; then wishing to save his companion the mortification of discovering that he had accidentally wounded his feelings, he hastened to change the conversation by observing—

"How will the magnanimous Marmaduke bear the news of your success?"

"Oh! to be sure, I was going to tell you about him when something put it out of my head," returned Leicester. "The great De Grandeville was greater than ever on the subject—it was such fun. He came up to me after breakfast this morning, and catching hold of my button, began: 'Ar—Mr. Leicester—excuse—ar—won't detain you five minutes, but—ar—you see in regard to—ar—the matter we conversed on yesterday, when you were good enough to give me the benefit of your opinion concerning a certain proposed alliance, if I may call your attention once more to the subject; you will perceive that—ar—the affair has assumed a very different aspect—ar—indeed so completely different that I feel confident you will agree with me in

considering the—ar—in fact the arrangement no longer desirable. I told him I was quite prepared to think as he did on this point, and begged to know in what the mysterious impediment consisted. ‘Well, sir—ar—I don’t say it—ar—by way of a boast—ar—such things are quite out of my line, but you must have yourself perceived the very marked encouragement which my advances met with yesterday evening—ar—in fact the game was—ar—in my own hands!’ I succeeded in repressing a strong desire to kick him, and he continued with bland dignity: ‘Ar—finding that this was the case, I felt that, as a man of honour, I was bound—ar—to make up my mind definitely as to my future course, and had—ar—all but resolved to acquaint the young lady with the brilliant, that is—ar—in many points unexceptionable position which awaited her, when fortunately—I might say providentially—it occurred to me to open a letter I had that evening received from my friend in the Herald’s College. Imagine my horror to learn that her actual father, the immediately previous Peyton himself, had—ar—*horresco referens*, as Pliny has it—’pon my word it quite upset me!’

“ ‘This dreadful Papa, had he murdered somebody?’ inquired I.

“ ‘No, sir,’ was the answer; ‘Lord Ferrers and other men with unexceptionable pedigrees have committed that crime. There is nothing necessarily vulgar about murder; the case was far worse. This intolerable proximate ancestor, who has not rested in his dishonoured grave above half-a-dozen years, was not only guilty of belonging to an intensely respectable firm in Liverpool, but had actually been insane enough to allow his name to be entered as sleeping partner in a large retail house on Ludgate Hill! Fancy a De Grandeville marrying the daughter of “Plumpstern & Peyton, dealers in cotton goods!”—’pon my word, sir, it took away my breath to think of the narrow escape I’d had!’ ‘And the young lady?’ inquired I. ‘Ar—of course it will be—ar—disappointment, as I’ve no doubt she considered—ar—that she’d made her book cleverly and stood to win, as the betting men say; but—ar—she soon had tact enough to perceive that the grapes were sour—ar—took that tone immediately,—clever girl, sir, very—ar—I shouldn’t wonder if she were to give out that she had discouraged my attentions—ar—in fact, virtually refused me—ar—I shall not contradict her, I owe her that—ar—with the exception of yourself, Mr. Leicester, her secret will be perfectly safe in my keeping.’ It was now my turn; so drawing myself up as stiffly as old Grant himself, I said, ‘Confidence begets confidence, Mr. De Grandeville; so in return for your candour allow me to inform you that Miss Peyton, doubtless driven to despair by your desertion, has done me the honour to accept me as your substitute! One word more,’ I continued, as, completely taken aback, he flushed crimson and began stammering out apologetical ejaculations, ‘I have listened in silence to your account of the transaction. I confess I have my own opinion about the matter, but should you adhere to your intention of preserving a strict secrecy in regard to the affair, I shall do so likewise; if not, I may feel called on to publish a somewhat different version of these love passages—one which will scarcely prove so agreeable to

your self-esteem; unless, indeed," I added, seeing that he was about to bluster, "you prefer settling the business in a shorter way; in which case I shall be quite at your service." So saying I raised my hat, bowed, and turning on my heel, left him to his meditations."

"Which must have been of a singularly unsatisfactory nature, I should imagine," returned Lewis, laughing. "But there is no chance of your fighting, I hope?"

"Not the slightest, I expect," replied Leicester. "De Grandeville, to do him justice, is no coward, but he will have sense enough to see that he can gain no *éclat* by giving the affair publicity, and will remain quiet for his own sake. Luckily, I'm not of a quarrelsome temperament, or I should have horse-whipped him, or at least tried at it, when he was talking about Laura."

"It was a temptation which in your place I could not have resisted," rejoined Lewis.

"Ah, it's easy to be magnanimous when one is happy," returned Leicester; "besides, I really was rather sorry for the poor devil, for, as I dare say you've guessed long ago, it is clear Laura refused him last night—in fact she as good as told me so."

"Perhaps it may benefit him," remarked Lewis. "His vanity was too plethoric, and a little judicious lowering may conduce to the general health of his moral system."

"I'm afraid it's a case of too long standing," replied Leicester. "Such a lamentable instance of egotism on the brain is not so easily to be cured; however, he's had a pretty strong dose this time, I must confess. And now, seeing that my boots have been wet through for the last three hours, the sooner I get rid of them the better." So saying, Charley Leicester took himself off, preparatory to performing the same operation on his perfidious boots.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GENERAL TAKES THE FIELD.

THE interview which Lewis had witnessed between Lord Bellefield and the girl dwelt in his thoughts, and was a source of much doubt and uneasiness to him. The quiet, secluded life he had led for the last year affording ample time for meditation—the almost total want of society (for poor Walter was no companion)—the peculiar position in which he was placed, shut out from all the pleasures and excitements natural to his age and taste—had given an unusually reflective turn to his vigorous mind, and produced in him a gravity and depth of character, to which, under different circumstances, he might never have attained. Thus, in the views he took of life, he was accustomed to look beyond the surface, and deeming it unworthy of a believer in the truths of Christianity to attribute events to the mere caprice of a blind destiny, was rather disposed to trace in such occurrences the

finger of a directing Providence, and to consider them as opportunities purposely thrown in our way, for the use or abuse of which we should one day be called to account, as for every talent committed to our charge. Holding these opinions, he could not be content to sit down quietly with the knowledge of which he had become possessed without making some effort to prevent Lord Bellefield from successfully accomplishing the evil he could not doubt he meditated. But what then should he do? The question was not an easy one to answer. The most natural and effectual means to employ would be to inform General Grant of the affair; he was the person likely (as the father of his future bride) to possess most influence over Lord Bellefield, while as possessor of the estate on which they resided he was certain to meet with respect and obedience from the parents of the girl. But besides the dislike every honourable man feels to undertake the office of tale-bearer, Lewis's chivalrous nature shrank from even the appearance of seeking to wreak his revenge on the man who had insulted him, by injuring him in the opinion of his future father-in-law. Again, were he to find out the girl and expostulate with her, he felt certain he should produce no good effect—the fact of her being aware of the terms on which he stood with her admirer would render her suspicious of his intentions, and prevent her from paying any regard to his arguments. At last it occurred to him to mention the thing to Charles Leicester, and persuade him, if possible, to visit the girl, and at all events to make her aware of the deceit which had been practised upon her by his brother in assuming his name. Accordingly, he determined to seek an early opportunity of speaking to Leicester on the subject; but good resolutions are always more easy to form than to carry into effect. On the following morning Leicester went to town, as well to acquaint his father with the important step he contemplated as to bear in person an invitation to an old family friend and *ci-devant* guardian of Laura Peyton's to join the party at Broadhurst; nor did he return till after several days had elapsed, so that it was nearly a week ere Lewis found the opportunity he sought for.

There had been a dinner-party at Broadhurst, and, as was the custom of the neighbourhood, the guests had departed early. Lewis waited till Leicester had disposed of a lady whom he was handing to a carriage, then drawing him aside, he made him acquainted with the interview which he had involuntarily witnessed, informing him at the same time of his object in so doing. As he proceeded with his tale Leicester's brow grew dark.

"It is really too bad of Bellefield," he muttered, "situated as he is in regard to this family; it shows a want of all proper feeling—all delicacy of mind—assuming my name, too! Suppose it had come to Laura's ears by any chance—'pon my word I've a great mind to speak to him about it—though, I don't know, it would only lead to a quarrel—Bellefield is not a man to brook interference. I feel quite as you do in regard to the affair, my dear Arundel, but really I don't see that I can do anything that would be of the slightest use."

"Surely you can find out the girl and prove to her the truth of

my statement, that your brother has deceived her by assuming your name—you owe that to yourself."

"She would be certain to tell him of it the next time she sees him," returned Leicester uneasily; "it would lead to a quarrel between us, and you don't know what Bellefield's resentment is when it's once excited—it's actually terrific, and that's the truth."

"But for your cousin, Miss Grant's sake, you ought not to let your brother proceed with this affair," urged Lewis; "surely you must see the matter in this light?"

"Ah! poor Annie," returned Leicester with a half sigh; "I sometimes wish that engagement had never been entered into. I doubt whether they are at all calculated to render each other happy. In fact, I've learned to look upon marriage in a very different light lately. However, it's no business of mine; wiser heads will have to settle it, luckily—" He paused, and after a few moments' deliberation resumed abruptly, "I'll do as you advise, Arundel. I'll see this girl and talk to her, and if Bellefield hears of it and makes himself disagreeable, why it can't be helped, that's all. He should not attempt such things, particularly in this neighbourhood. He ought to have more respect for the General and his daughter; it shows a want of good taste and good feeling. Besides, as well as I can judge from the glimpse I had of her in the refreshment-room, the girl's not so unusually pretty, after all. She'd an awful pair of hands, if I recollect right."

A contemptuous smile passed across Lewis's handsome features as his companion promulgated the above original moral distinction. Leicester, however, did not observe it, and continued—

"Just fancy my coming out in the character of a virtuous mentor. I only hope I shall get through my arduous duties without laughing at my own performance. 'Pon my word, though, it's rather serious when a man feels inclined to scoff at himself for doing his duty from the sheer inconsistency of the thing. I tell you what, Arundel, I believe I've been a very naughty boy without in the least knowing it. I've always considered myself the victim of circumstances, and set all my peccadilloes down to that account; but I don't see why I need bother you by making you my father confessor."

Lewis, considering the train of thought into which Leicester had fallen, one likely to lead to useful, practical results, was about to encourage him to proceed, when a servant approached them and placed a small, crumpled, and not over clean piece of paper in Lewis's hand. Holding it under the light of a lamp, he was enabled with difficulty to decipher the following words:—

"TO MUSTER ARUNDEL.—Sur, the party as you knows of is hout to-night, and more of his sort along vith him. Ve are safe for a shindy; but being quite ready for ther blackguards, lives in good 'opes hof a capture—hin which hif you likes to assist, not minding a crack o' ther head, should sich occur, which will sometimes in ther best regerlated famurlies, pleas to follur ther bearer, as will conduct you to your humbel servaunt to commarnd,

"J. MILLAR."

"That's glorious!" exclaimed Lewis, placing the missive in the hands of his companion. "I never did catch a poacher in my life, but I've often wished to do so; the whole scene must be so picturesque and unlike anything one has ever met with—the darkness, the excitement—but you are laughing at my eagerness. Well, I confess to a love of adventure for its own sake; if I'd lived in the middle ages I should have been a knight-errant, that's certain. I suppose it's no use asking you to join us? There's metal more attractive in the drawing-room, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Why," returned Charley, arranging his neckcloth by aid of a glass placed in the cloak-room for the benefit of the ladies who wished to wrap up becomingly, "really I must own I prefer Laura's smiles even to the delights of a possible *rencontre* with your friend, Mr. What's-his-name, the poacher."

"Hardy is the fellow's name," replied Lewis. "He is a chartist and all sorts of horrors, so that I don't feel the smallest degree of sympathy for him. Do you know where the General is to be found? I suppose, as I may be very late, or even obliged to sleep at Millar's cottage, I must ask his sanction ere I start on my expedition."

"I think you'd better," returned Leicester; "he's in the library. I saw him go there after he had seen Lady Runnymede to her carriage; so good-night. I shall be curious to learn in the morning whose brains have been knocked out." And with this agreeably suggestive remark Leicester ended the conversation and strolled off to the drawing-room.

Lewis proceeded at once to the library, where he found not only General Grant, but, to his extreme annoyance, Lord Bellefield also; there was, however, no help for it, and he accordingly explained his wishes as briefly as possible. The General heard him to the end without speaking. His first idea was that such a request was strange and unbecoming the peaceful gravity that should environ the office of a tutor, and he intended to favour him with a dignified refusal; but as Lewis proceeded, his eager tones and sparkling eyes recalled to the old officer the days of his youth when the spirit of enterprise was strong within him, and in the wild bivouac, the dashing assault, the hand-to-hand struggle "i' the imminent deadly breach," and the many exciting vicissitudes of a campaigning life, he had found a degree of pleasure which his age knew not, and he was fain to accord a gracious assent.

"Your father was a soldier, Mr. Arundel, I think you told me?"

Lewis replied in the affirmative, mentioning some engagement in which he had particularly distinguished himself. The General listened to him with complacency, then exclaimed—

"That's it, sir, that's it! I confess when I first heard your request, I considered it unnatural, in fact, unbecoming in a civilian, but in a soldier's son it assumes an entirely different character. I like to see spirit in a young man." (Here he glanced at Lord Bellefield, who, apparently engrossed by a legal document which he was perusing, seemed unconscious of Lewis's presence.) "It's a pity your father was unable to afford you a commission: there's been some very pretty

fighting in India lately, and you might have distinguished yourself." He paused, then added, "I know most of the agricultural labourers about here; did Millar tell you any of these poachers' names?"

"Hardy, a blacksmith, was the most notorious character," returned Lewis.

As he mentioned the name Lord Bellefield started so violently that he nearly overturned the lamp by which he was reading. Seeing the General's eyes fixed on him inquiringly, he rose, and putting his hand to his side, drew a deep breath as he exclaimed—

"One of those sharp stitches, as they call them—nothing worse. You know I am subject to them; it's want of exercise producing indigestion. I tell you what," he continued, "I've rather a curiosity to witness Mr. Arundel's prowess, and see what sport this poacher will afford. Man-hunting, in the literal *feræ naturæ* sense of the term, will be a new excitement."

"We'll all go," exclaimed the General, springing up with the alertness of a young man. "If these rascals choose to trespass on my land and destroy my property, who so fit to resist them and bring them to justice as myself? I'll make the necessary alterations in my dress, and we'll start immediately."

Lord Bellefield urged the lateness of the hour, the cold night air, the chance of danger to life or limb—but in vain; General Grant had taken the crotchet into his head, and he was not the man to be easily induced to change his mind. Accordingly Lewis found himself suddenly associated with two as strange companions as ever a man was embarrassed withal. Still there was no help for it; and inwardly pondering what possible reason Lord Bellefield could have for joining the expedition, and why he had started at the mention of Hardy's name, Lewis hastened to wrap himself in a rough pea-jacket, and selected a heavy knotted stick, wherewith he proposed to knock respect for the rights of property into the head of any misguided individual who might be deaf to all milder argument. As he returned to the hall the General made his appearance, carrying under his arm a cavalry sabre; his bearing was even more stiff and erect than usual, and his eye flashed with all the fire of youth.

"Early on parade, I see, Mr. Arundel," he said, with something more nearly approaching to a smile on his countenance than Lewis had ever previously observed there. "We'll read those poaching rascals a lesson they will not easily forget, sir."

As he spoke a light footstep was heard approaching, and in another moment Annie Grant bounded down the staircase, her glossy curls streaming wildly over her shoulders, and her cheeks flushed with the speed at which she had come.

"My dear papa!" she began, then turning pale as her eye fell upon the sword, she continued: "Oh! it is really true! I hoped they were only deceiving me in jest. Dearest papa, you will be good and kind, and not go out after these men? Suppose any accident should occur? think how valuable your life is—papa, you will not go?"

"Annie, I thought you were perfectly aware of my extreme dislike to, or I may say disapproval of all uncalled-for displays of feeling. I

am about to perform a duty incumbent on my position, and I need scarcely add that any attempt to induce me to neglect that duty will not only prove ineffectual, but will be highly displeasing to me. Not another word," he continued, seeing she was about to resume her entreaties; "return immediately to the drawing-room and apologise to our friends in my name for being obliged to leave them."

At this moment a servant announced that his master's shooting pony was at the door, and that Lord Bellefield had already started; so placing his hat on his head with an air of offended dignity, the General marched proudly out of the hall. Lewis was about to follow him, when, glancing at Annie, he perceived that she had sunk into a chair, and covering her face with her hands, had given way to an irrepressible burst of tears. The young tutor paused—wishing to reassure her by promising to use his best efforts to shield her father from danger, and yet fearing to intrude upon her grief. In his embarrassment he accidentally dropped his stick; starting at the sound, Annie for the first time perceived him, and springing up, she came hurriedly towards him, exclaiming—

"Oh, Mr. Arundel! I am so glad you are going. *You* will take care of papa, will you not?"

As she spoke she laid her hand on his arm and gazed up into his face imploringly.

"I will most assuredly try to do so, Miss Grant," returned Lewis calmly, though that light touch thrilled through him like a shock of electricity. "You need not alarm yourself so greatly," he continued, anxious to soothe her; "believe me, your apprehensions have greatly exaggerated any probable danger."

"You really think so?" returned Annie doubtfully. "At all events," she continued, "I shall be much happier now I know you are going. I am sure you will try and take care of papa."

"I will, indeed," returned Lewis earnestly, as, glancing towards the door, he essayed to depart; but Annie, completely engrossed by her anxiety to secure his services on her father's behalf, still unconsciously retained her hold on his arm, and Lewis was obliged gently to remove the little hand that detained him. As their fingers met, Annie, becoming suddenly aware of what Miss Livingstone would have termed her "indiscreet and unpardonable heedlessness," blushed very becomingly; then with a sudden impulse of gratitude and warm feeling she extended her hand to Lewis, saying—

"Thank you very much for all your kindness, Mr. Arundel. Mind you take good care of yourself as well as of papa—I shall not go to bed till I hear you have brought him safe home again."

Lewis pressed the fair hand offered to him, repeated his assurances that her alarm was unnecessary, and hastened to follow General Grant. Annie gazed after him with tearful eyes, but his words comforted her. She had already begun to rely on him in moments of difficulty or of danger.

The moon was shining brightly, though flitting clouds passed from time to time across its silvery disc, wrapping wood and hill and valley in momentary darkness, only to enhance their beauty when its pale,

cold rays once more fell uninterruptedly upon them, imparting to the scene the magic of a fairy twilight. Such, however, were scarcely Lewis's thoughts as, haunted by the appealing expression of Annie's soft eyes, he hastened to overtake his companions. The party proceeded in silence, following their guide, who was none other than the renegade "Villiam," across one of the wildest portions of the park towards a young larch plantation covering about forty acres of ground. This spot, named Tod's Hole Spinney, from certain fox earths that had existed in it till their occupants' partiality for dining on pheasants had led to their ejection, was considered, from its isolated situation, the thick growth of underwood, the fact of a running stream passing through it, and other propitious circumstances, the most amply stocked preserve on the property, and it was with a degree of annoyance proportioned to the enormity of the offence that the General learned this was the place selected by the poachers for the scene of their depredations. As they approached the spot the report of a gun was heard, followed by three or four others in rapid succession. General Grant, irritated beyond control by this audacity, immediately rode forward at a brisk trot. Lewis, bearing in mind Annie's injunction, grasped the crupper of the saddle firmly with his left hand, and with this slight assistance ran by the General's side, keeping pace with the horse. In this manner they had nearly reached the wood, when a man sprang from behind a bush, and would have seized the horse's bridle had not Lewis interposed, saying, in a low voice, "Don't you know us, Millar? it is General Grant, who, when he heard the poachers were out, determined to come with me."

"I beg yer honour's pardon," returned the keeper, touching his hat as he recognised his master. "I never expected to ha' seen you here to-night, to be sure."

"I am usually to be found where my duty calls me," returned the General stiffly. "These scoundrels seem to be out in force," he continued.

"Vell, I take it there's as many on 'em as ve shall know wot to do with," was the reply; "but I've got above a dozen men on the look-out, only in course they're scattered."

"And how do you propose to act?" inquired the General.

"I thort of taking a party into the wood, trying to captiwate long Hardy and one or two of the ringleaders, chaps as I've had my eye on for ever so long; then take ther game from the tothers, and seize their guns hif posserbul. But the chief thing is to captiwate that willain Hardy; so I means to leave three or four men on the look-out, in case he manages to do us and break cover."

"Your plan seems a good one," returned the General reflectively. "How many men do you propose to take into the wood with you?"

"Vell, there's half-a-dozen lads a laying down behind those bushes yonder, and there's two more jist inside that gap; then there's myself and Muster Arundel."

"Let the boy that guided us hold my horse," began General Grant.

"Hif I might advise," interrupted Millar, "yer honour would remain in this wery place; and hif Hardy should get away from us—as he's likely enough, for he's as strong and houdacious as a steam-engine—he's a-most sure to break cover here; in vich case yer honour can ride him down, and hif he dares to show fight, give him a cut hover the skull with yer long sword there."

"You feel sure he will endeavour to effect his retreat on this side?" inquired the General doubtfully.

"Sartain sure, I may say," cried Millar confidently; then, as his master turned to explain to Lord Bellefield, who had just come up, the plan of operations, he added in a low voice, so that Lewis only might hear—

"The old Ginerals pluckey enough for anything, but his legs ain't so young as they used to be, and he's rather touched in the vind, vich von't do for sich a valk as we've got before us."

At this moment more shots were heard in the wood, but apparently much nearer than the last. The poachers were evidently advancing in that direction.

"There is not a moment to be lost, Millar," exclaimed the General eagerly. "I think as you say, I may be of more use here. Some one *must* remain outside to cut off the retreat of these fellows if you should succeed in driving them out of the wood. Lord Bellefield will accompany your party. Where are the other watchers on this side stationed?"

"About fifty yards apart, along the ditch skirting the wood. If yer honour wants help, a note on this whistle will produce it." So saying, Millar handed him an ivory dog-whistle; then signing to "Villiam" to proceed, and requesting Lord Bellefield and Lewis to follow him, the keeper conducted them along a narrow track leading into the wood.

"Do you really expect that Hardy will attempt to cross that part of the park, or was your assertion merely a white lie, framed to secure the General's safety?" asked Lewis as he walked by the keeper's side.

"Vell, it worn't altogether a lie," was the reply; "for if we don't nab the gentleman, that's the side he'll try for, as it's easiest for him to get away; but if I vonce has a fair hit at him, I don't mean to leave him a chance to get away. I shall not stand nice about hurting him neither, I can tell yer. He beat Sam Jones, one o' my hunder-keepers, so savage that the poor feller worn't out of his blessed bed for two months. He deserves summut pretty strong for that."

"Mind you point him out to me, if you catch sight of him," rejoined Lewis. "I am most anxious to be introduced to this truculent gentleman."

"Yer can't mistake him hif yer once sets eyes on him," returned the keeper; "he's half a head taller than any of the rest of 'em, but I'll show him to yer."

As he spoke they reached the spot where the six men were waiting, though, so well had they concealed themselves, Lewis was close upon them ere he was aware of their vicinity.

"Now, my lads, are yer all ready?" inquired their leader in a low voice. An answer in the affirmative was followed by the order—

"Come on, then;" when Lord Bellefield interposed by saying, "One moment! Listen to me, my men: I offer five guineas reward to any of you who may secure Hardy."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IS CHIEFLY CULINARY, CONTAINING RECIPES FOR A "GOOD PRESERVE" AND A "PRETTY PICKLE."

AFTER a strict injunction from Millar to preserve silence, the party in search of Hardy and his associates again moved forward, Lord Bellefield, Millar, and Lewis in front, and the others following two abreast. As soon as they had entered the wood the remaining men joined them, making altogether a company of eleven. As they advanced farther into the plantation, the boughs of the trees, becoming thicker and more closely interlaced, intercepted the moonlight and rendered their onward progress a matter of some difficulty. The gamekeeper, however, knew every intricacy of the path, and could have found his way in the darkest night as easily as at noonday. After winding among the trees for some minutes they came upon a little glade where the underwood had been partially cleared away and a small quantity of barley stacked for the purpose of feeding the pheasants. At the entrance to the space thus cleared the party halted, and Millar, creeping forward on his hands and knees, reached the stack. Sheltering himself behind it, he made his way to the opposite side, where he was lost to sight; reappearing almost immediately, he cautiously rejoined the others, saying in a low whisper: "I expected how it would be; there is from twenty or thirty pheasants roosting on the trees beyond the stack there, and Hardy and his mates being aware on it, is a-making of their way through the bushes right ahead. I could hear 'em plain enough when I was at the stack yonder. Now, two on yer must come along o' me, creep to the stack and hide behind it as yer see me do, then wait till them blackguards has let fly at the pheasants, and afore they can load again ve three must jump forrard and try and captivate Hardy. In the meantime, you others must make yer way round through the bushes and take 'em in the rear, and help us if we wants helping."

"Which you will do most certainly," returned Lord Bellefield. "I'll lead the party that remains."

"And I'll go with you, Millar," observed Lewis.

"And you, Sam," continued Millar, addressing the under-keeper before alluded to. The man came forward, and placing himself by Lewis's side, the three crept along till they had reached the stack, sheltered by which they again stood upright. Scarcely had they taken their places when two guns, followed by four others, were discharged in rapid succession, and so close to them, that the shot

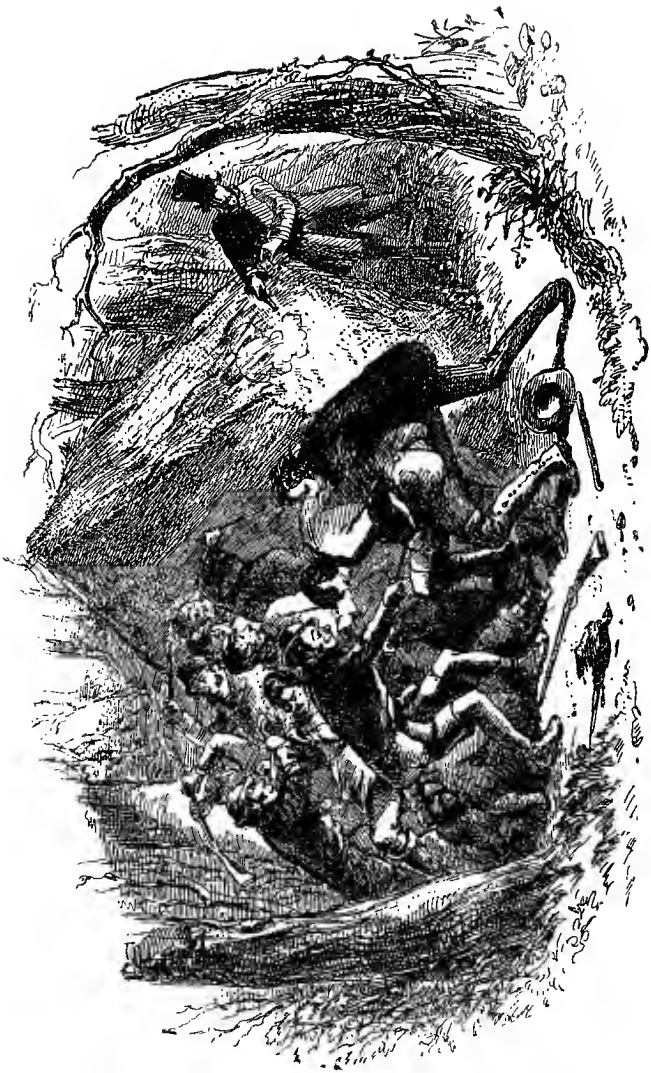
pattering amongst the underwood was distinctly audible, and one of the wounded pheasants dropped at Lewis's feet; while almost immediately afterwards a couple of men ran forward to collect the fallen game. The foremost of these was a fellow of Herculean proportions: as he stooped to pick up a pheasant a ray of moonlight revealed his features, and Lewis immediately recognised his former antagonist, the tall Chartist. At the same moment Millar whispered, "That's our man; go ahead!"

"Leave him to me," returned Lewis eagerly; and bending forward, with a bound like that of a tiger he sprang upon him.

The poacher was taken so completely by surprise (his back being turned towards his assailant) that Lewis, encircling him with a grasp of iron, was enabled to pinion his arms to his sides. Like a wild bull caught in the toils, his struggles to free himself were tremendous; but Lewis, now in the full vigour of his strength, was an adversary not easily to be shaken off, and despite his unrivalled powers, the poacher failed to extricate his arms. Shouting, therefore, to his companion for assistance, he desired him, with an oath, to shoot the — keeper; but that individual was unable to comply with his comrade's benevolent suggestion by reason of certain well-directed blows wherewith Sam Jones, the under-keeper, was producing a marked alteration in the general outline of his features. In the meantime, Millar, drawing forth a piece of cord, began coolly to tie Hardy's wrists together, disregarding a series of ferocious kicks with which he assailed him. At this moment the other poachers, to the number of some half-dozen, attracted by the sound of blows, reached the scene of action, but the party led by Lord Bellefield were equally on the alert, and the fight became general. And now the capture of the poacher Hardy appeared certain: exhausted by his unavailing struggles to free himself from Lewis's encircling arms, he could offer no effectual resistance to Millar, who continued most methodically to bind his wrists, in no way diverted from his purpose by the storm of blows which raged around him, many of which fell on his unprotected person, when suddenly the report of a pistol rung sharply above the other sounds of the combat, and an acute, stinging pain darted through Lewis's left shoulder, causing him such agony for the moment that he involuntarily relaxed his grasp. Hardy was not slow to avail himself of the opportunity thus offered. Flinging off the young tutor with so much violence that he would have fallen had not one of the gamekeeper's assistants caught him and prevented it, he wrenched his hands from Millar's grasp, and raising them, still bound together as they were, struck the keeper such a severe blow on the side of the head that he reeled and fell; then seeing that his companions, overpowered by numbers and disheartened by his supposed capture, were giving way on all sides, he turned, and dashing into the bushes, disappeared, not so quickly, however, but that Lewis, who, despite his wound, had never taken his eyes off him for a moment, perceived the movement.

Grasping his stick, which he had contrived to retain during the struggle, firmly with his right hand, he lost no time in following the fugitive, and guided by the crashing of the bushes, kept close on his

traces till they reached the boundary hedge; breaking his way through this obstacle with the strength and fury of some wild animal, the poacher sprang across the ditch into the open park beyond. Seeing that he had a desperate man to deal with, and fearing that although the first severe pain had abated, and little more than a sensation of numbness remained, his left arm might prove in some degree incapacitated by the wound he had received, Lewis paused a moment to reconnoitre ere he followed him. To his great delight, he perceived he had reached the hedge along the side of which the watchers were stationed, near the spot where General Grant had taken up his position. Hardy, unconscious how closely he was followed, stopped also a moment while he endeavoured to set free his wrists; but so securely had Millar bound them, that although by a violent exertion of strength he contrived to render the cord slacker, he was unable wholly to succeed in his object. Fearing, however, that the cord would not hold out much longer, and unwilling to lose the only advantage gained by his previous struggle, Lewis determined once more to endeavour to seize him. Shouting, therefore, to give notice to the watchers where their assistance was likely to be required, he sprang across the ditch and advanced towards his antagonist. At first the poacher appeared inclined to stand his ground; but seeing his opponent was armed with a stout stick, and recollecting his own defenceless condition, he resolved to trust rather to his unrivalled fleetness, and turning away with an exclamation of disappointed rage, again betook himself to flight. This portion of the park was clear of trees or any other cover for a space of more than half a mile square, beyond which lay another larger wood; if Hardy could contrive to reach this, his escape would become a matter of certainty. The ground, which had once formed part of an ancient Roman camp, lay in terraces, and this circumstance gave Hardy, who knew every inch of the country by heart, a slight advantage. In speed they were very equally matched; for although Lewis, from his youth and light, active make, was perhaps really the fleetest, Hardy was in better training. When they first started the poacher was about ten yards ahead, and they had reached nearly half the centre of the space between the two woods ere Lewis had diminished that distance materially. Hitherto they had been running uphill, and the poacher's superior condition (as a jockey would term it) enabled him to continue his rapid course without the pace telling as much as it did on his pursuer; but now the ground began to descend, and Lewis, having saved himself for a short distance to recover breath, put forth his whole powers, and despite the utmost exertions the poacher was capable of making, gained upon him so fast that it was evident that in a few more strides he must overtake him. But Hardy's usual good luck appeared not even yet to have deserted him, for at the very moment when it seemed certain Lewis must come up with him, a cloud obscured the moon, and the poacher, taking advantage of this accident to double on his pursuer, contrived to make such good use of his knowledge of the ground, that when the bright moonlight again enabled Lewis



A COWARDLY SHOT.

to discern his retreating figure, he perceived, to his extreme chagrin and disappointment, that the fugitive would gain the wood, and doubtless effect his escape, before he could again overtake him. It was then with no small satisfaction that, just as he was about to give up the chase as hopeless, he caught sight of a man on horseback galloping in a direction which must effectually cut off the poacher's retreat. Another moment sufficed to show him that the rider, in whom he immediately recognised General Grant, had perceived the fugitive, and intended to prevent his escape. Lewis accordingly strained every nerve to reach the spot in time to render assistance, more particularly as he remarked that Hardy had by some means contrived to set his hands at liberty. In spite of his utmost exertions, however, it was evident that the encounter would take place before he could arrive; and remembering his promise to Annie, it was with mingled feelings of anxiety for her father's safety, and self-reproach for having quitted him, that he prepared to witness the struggle. As soon as the General perceived the state of affairs, he waved his hand as a sign to Lewis; then drawing his sabre, stood up in his stirrups and rode gallantly at the poacher, shouting to him at the same time to stop and yield himself prisoner. Hardy paid no attention to the summons, continuing to run on till he felt the horse's breath hot upon his neck; then, as General Grant, after again calling on him to "surrender, or he would cut him down," prepared to put his threat into execution, he dodged aside to avoid the blow, and springing suddenly upon the rider, dashed the sword from his hand, and seizing him by the throat, endeavoured to drag him off his horse. The old man, though taken by surprise, clung firmly to his saddle, and spurring his horse, tried to shake off his assailant; but his strength unfortunately was not equal to his courage, and the poacher, snatching at the rein, backed the horse till it reared almost erect and flung its rider forcibly to the ground. Apparently bent on revenge, Hardy, still retaining his grasp on the bridle, led the horse over the fallen body of the man, with the brutal intention of trampling him to death. But the generous instinct of the animal served to frustrate his evil purpose; as, though he led it twice directly across its prostrate master, the horse raised its feet and carefully avoided treading on him. Striking the animal ferociously on the head with his clenched fist, he next attempted to back it in the same direction, but the frightened animal sprang aside and plunged so violently that he was unable to effect his design. He was still striving to do so when Lewis, breathless with the speed at which he had run, reached the spot. Instantly leaping over the fallen man, stick in hand, he struck Hardy so severe a blow on the wrist that he was forced to quit his hold on the bridle, and the scared horse broke away and galloped off, snorting with terror. The poacher, infuriated by the pain of the blow, forgot all prudential considerations; and heedless of the approach of three of the watchers, who, attracted by the noise of the struggle, were rapidly hastening towards the spot, he rushed upon Lewis, and disregarding a heavy blow with which the young tutor greeted him, flung his arms round him and endeavoured to dash him to the ground. Fortunately for

Lewis, he was not ignorant of the manly exercise of wrestling, and his proficiency in the art stood him in good stead at this moment; for, despite his gigantic strength, Hardy could not succeed in throwing him. In vain did he lift him from the ground; with whatever violence he flung him down, he still fell upon his legs; in vain did he compress him in his powerful arms, till Lewis felt as if every rib were giving way—the only effect of his exertions was to exhaust his own strength; till, at length taking advantage of an incautious movement of his adversary, the young tutor contrived to pass his leg behind that of the poacher and thus trip him up. His victory was, however, nearly proving fatal to him, for in falling the ruffian clutched him by the throat and dragged him down with him. Nor, although Lewis being uppermost was enabled to raise himself on one knee and return the compliment by inserting his hand within the folds of his adversary's neck-cloth, could he force him to relinquish his grasp. Fortunately, help was at hand; and just as Lewis began to feel that it was becoming serious, and that if the pressure on his throat continued much longer he should be strangled outright, the three assistants came up; two of them immediately flung themselves upon the poacher, while the third dragged Lewis, who was rapidly growing exhausted, from the deadly embrace of his prostrate foe. Having with some difficulty succeeded in so doing, the man laid him at full length on the grass, and leaving him to recover as best he might, turned to assist his companions to secure Hardy. This was now a comparatively easy task, for his final struggle with Lewis had exhausted even the poacher's strength, and after a futile attempt to rise and shake off his captors, he ceased to resist, and submitted in sullen silence, while his arms were secured with the General's sword-belt. This operation concluded, the man who had rescued Lewis returned to him and found him sufficiently recovered to sit up.

"Have you looked to the General? is he uninjured?" was his first question.

"I'm afear'd he's terrible hurt, if he ain't killed outright; leastways he's onsensibul, and one of his arms seems crushed like," was the consolatory reply.

"Oh that I had come up a minute sooner!" exclaimed Lewis in a tone of bitter self-reproach.

"You'd have been a dead man if yer had, sir," was the reply. "If that willian there had had hold of your throat half a minute longer, you'd have been as stiff as a leg of mutton by this time."

"Better that I had perished than that this should have occurred," murmured Lewis; then turning to the man, he continued, "Lend me your arm; I can walk now," and rising with difficulty, he advanced towards the spot where General Grant lay. He was perfectly insensible; his hat had fallen off, and his grey hair, exposed to the night dews, imparted, as the moonlight streamed on it, a ghastly expression to his features, while his right arm was bent under him in an unnatural position, which left no doubt that it must be broken, probably in more places than one. Lewis knelt down beside him, and raising his uninjured hand, placed his finger on the wrist.

"I can feel his pulse beat distinctly," he observed, after a moment's pause. "He is not dead, nor dying; indeed, except the injury to his arm, I hope he may not be seriously hurt. No time must be lost in carrying him to the house and procuring a surgeon."

"Somebody ought to go to Broadhurst to let'm know what's happened and get us some help. We've more than we can manage here, you see," urged the assistant. "It will take two on us to purwent that blackguard Hardy from getting away; he won't lose no chance, you may depend."

"I'll stay with General Grant if you'll run to the house," returned Lewis feebly.

"Your arm's a bleeding, sir. Did that willian stab you?" inquired the assistant.

"No; I was hurt in the wood," was the reply.

"Do you think you could ride, sir?" continued the man; "'cos if you could, I'd try and catch the horse—he's a grazin' very quiet yonder—and then you could go to the house, start off one of the grooms to fetch a doctor, send some of the people down here to help us, get yer own wound dressed, and break the news to the family better than such a chap as me."

This observation was a true one, and Lewis felt that it was so; therefore, although he dreaded the task, and would rather have again encountered the dangers he had just escaped than witnessed Annie Grant's dismay and sorrow when she should find her dark anticipations realised, he agreed to the arrangement; and as the man succeeded in catching the horse almost immediately, he mounted with some difficulty and rode off at speed, though the rapid motion increased the pain of his wound till it became almost insupportable. He reached Broadhurst in less than ten minutes, never drawing bridle till he entered the stable-yard, although he turned so faint and dizzy on the way that more than once he was nearly falling from the saddle. His first act was to despatch a mounted groom to procure a surgeon; he next sent off four of the men-servants with a hurdle converted into an extemporary litter, giving them exact directions where to find their master, and waiting to see that they started without loss of time; he then attempted to dismount, but was unable to do so without assistance. Having paused a few moments till the faintness had again gone off, he entered the house by the servants' entrance, and calling the butler aside, desired him to summon Mr. Leicester as quietly as possible; then, sinking into a chair and resting his head on his hands, he awaited his arrival with ill-concealed anxiety, dreading lest some incautious person should abruptly inform Annie of her father's accident.

CHAPTER XXXII

LEWIS MAKES A DISCOVERY AND GETS INTO A "STATE OF MIND."

THE end of the room at which Lewis had seated himself lay in shadow, so that Leicester, who shortly made his appearance wrapped in a dressing-gown, could merely distinguish the outline of his figure.

"Why, Arundel," he began, "is anything the matter? Here has Wilson been and roused me out of my first sleep, with a face like that of the party who 'drew Priam's curtains i' the dead o' the night.' Where's Governor Grant, and how is it that you're home first?"

"It's no joking matter, Mr. Leicester," returned Lewis faintly, and without raising his head. "The poachers have given us more trouble than we expected, and in attempting to capture Hardy the General has been thrown from his horse. His right arm is broken in two places, and when I came away he was still insensible."

From the position in which Lewis sat (his elbows resting on a table and his forehead supported by his hands) he was unable to perceive anything that might be going on in the apartment, consequently he had continued his speech, ignorant that a third person had joined them. Annie (for she it was who, pale as some midnight ghost, had glided noiselessly into the room) laid her hand on Leicester's arm to prevent his calling attention to her presence, while eager and trembling she listened to Lewis's account of her father's accident; and overcome for the moment by these evil tidings, she remained speechless, leaning against a chair for support. Lewis, surprised at Leicester's silence, raised his head languidly, and the first object that met his eyes was Annie Grant's sinking figure. With an exclamation of dismay he attempted to start up, but he was becoming so weak from loss of blood that he failed to accomplish his purpose. Roused by the action, Annie recovered herself, and as a new idea struck her, she asked—

"Where, then, is poor papa? Have they brought him home? I must go to him instantly!"

"He is not yet arrived, Miss Grant," returned Lewis in a low voice that trembled with conflicting emotions; "his own servants are carrying him, and a surgeon will be here instantly. I——" he paused abruptly, for Annie, drawing herself up, advanced towards him, and with flashing eyes exclaimed—

"Is this then the way in which you have fulfilled your promise, Mr. Arundel? I trusted so implicitly to your assurance that you would watch over him and protect him; and now you have not only failed him in the moment of danger but deserted him in his necessity, and secured your own safety by coming home to break my heart with these evil tidings. Oh, I am ashamed of you—grieved—disappointed!"

"Hush, my dear Annie," observed Leicester soothingly. "Arundel might not be able to prevent this accident—you are too hasty."

"No, no!" returned Lewis in a low, broken voice, "I deserve her reproaches. I ought never to have quitted him, and yet I did so

believing that I left him in perfect safety. I could not bear to stand inactive when other men were about to face danger; besides, I had pledged myself to assist in capturing this poacher." He paused, then added, "I have been to blame, Miss Grant, but I am not quite the poltroon you imagine me. I did indeed leave your father that I might accompany the attacking party into the wood, but I strained every nerve to come up with Hardy before General Grant encountered him; and although that was impossible, I arrived in time to prevent him from forcing the horse to trample the life out of the fallen man, and wounded as I am, I engaged with and captured, at the risk of my own life, the ruffian who had injured your father; nor should I have been here now, but that it was necessary for some one to procure assistance and summon a surgeon, and I rode back at speed to my own injury, that I might leave a more efficient man with the General."

As he ceased speaking the butler entered the room, bearing in his hand a lamp, and for the first time the light fell upon Lewis's figure. Leicester, as he beheld him, uttered an exclamation of surprise and horror, which his appearance was well calculated to call forth. His face was deadly pale, save a red line across the forehead, where some bramble had torn the skin; his dark hair, heavy with the night dew, clung in wild disorder around his temples; and his clothes, stained with mud, bore traces of the severity of the struggle in which he had been engaged; the sleeve of his left arm, which still rested on the table, was soaked with gore, while the momentary excitement which had animated him as he spoke had given way to a return of the faintness produced by the loss of blood, which was by this time very considerable. As this ghastly figure met her sight Annie uttered a slight shriek—then a sense of the cruel injustice of her own reproaches banished every other consideration, and springing towards him, she exclaimed—

"Oh, Mr. Arundel, what can we do for you? how shocked, how grieved I am!—will you, can you forgive me?"

Lewis smiled and attempted to reply, but the words died away upon his lips, and completely overcome by faintness, he would have fallen from the chair had not Leicester supported him. Fortunately, at this moment the surgeon arrived, and Annie quitting the apartment, Lewis's sleeve was cut open, his wound temporarily bound up, and his temples bathed with some stimulating essence which dispelled his faintness, before the surgeon's services were required for General Grant. The latter gentleman had recovered consciousness ere he reached Broadhurst, and though suffering acute pain from his broken arm, appeared cool and collected. His first question had been "whether Hardy had escaped," and he seemed to revive from the moment he was informed of his capture. His next inquiry was who had taken him, and on learning it was Lewis, he was much pleased, muttering, "Brave lad, brave lad! pity he's not in the army." He recognised Annie and spoke kindly to her, gave orders for the safe custody of Hardy, demanded of the surgeon who examined his arm whether he wished to amputate it, as he felt quite equal to the operation, and in short, under circumstances which would have overpowered

any man of less firmness of character, behaved like a gentleman and a brave old soldier, as he was. Fortunately the surgeons (for a second, attracted by the rumour of an accident, as vultures are if a camel dies in the desert, had come to test the truth of the old proverb that two heads are better than one) succeeded in setting the arm, pronounced amputation unnecessary, and after careful examination, gave it as their opinion that, with the exception of a few contusions of little consequence, the General had sustained no further injury. Having come to this satisfactory conclusion, they found time to direct their attention to Lewis. After much whispered consultation and considerable exchange of learned winks and profound nods, they informed him that he had been wounded by a shot from a pistol (which, by the way, he could have told them), and that they had very little doubt that the ball remained in the wound, in which case it would be necessary to extract it. To this Lewis replied, "The sooner the better." Accordingly they proceeded to put him to great agony by probing the wound to find the ball, after which they hurt him still more in extracting it, performing both operations with such easy cheerfulness of manner and utter disregard of the patient's feelings, that a bystander would have imagined they were carving a cold shoulder of mutton rather than the same joint of live humanity. But surgeons, like fathers, have flinty hearts, unmacadamised by the smallest grain of pity for the wretched victims of their uncomfortable skill; their idea of the "Whole Duty of Man" being that he should afford them "an interesting case" when living, and become a "good subject" for them when he has ceased to be one to the Queen. After the ball was extracted, Lewis requested it might be handed to him; it was small, and from its peculiar shape he perceived that it must have been discharged from a pistol with a rifle barrel.

"If you will allow me," he said, "I shall keep this bit of lead as a memorial of this evening's entertainment."

"Oh, certainly," replied the most cheerful surgeon, "by all means; if it had but gone an eighth of an inch farther," he added, rubbing his hands joyously, "only an eighth of an inch, it would have injured the spinal cord, and you would have been—droll how these things occur sometimes—you'd have been paralysed for life."

Lewis shuddered, and wished devoutly he were for the time being Caliph Haroun Alraschid, in which case the facetious surgeon would have added a practical acquaintance with the effects of the bastinado on the sole of the human foot to his other medical knowledge.

"I don't think," resumed the doctor meditatively, "I don't think you need apprehend any very unpleasant result, as far as I can as yet see into the case. Of course," he continued with hilarity, "erysipelas might supervene, but that is seldom fatal, unless it affects the brain; and I should hope the great effusion of blood will prevent that in the present instance. You feel very weak, don't you?"

Lewis replied in the affirmative, and his tormentor continued—

"Well, you need not be uneasy on that score; I don't apprehend a return of syncope, but if you should feel an unnatural deficiency of vital heat, or perceive any symptoms of approaching collapse, I would

advise your ringing the bell, and I'll be with you instantly. Scalpel's obliged to be off; he's got a very interesting broken leg—compound fracture—waiting for him down at the village, besides some dozen agreeable minor casualties, the result of to-night's work. Keep up your spirits, and go to sleep—your shoulder is easier now?"

"It feels as if the blade of a red-hot sword were being constantly plunged into it," returned Lewis crossly.

"Delighted to hear it," replied Dr. Bistoury, rubbing his hands; "just what I could have wished; nothing inert there! I would recommend your bearing (which word he pronounced be-a-a-ring) it quietly, and rely upon my looking in the first thing to-morrow." So saying he rubbed his hands, chuckled, and departed.

In spite of his wound, which continued very painful, Lewis contrived to get a few hours' sleep, and awoke so much refreshed that he resisted all attempts to keep him in bed, and though stiff and weak to an excessive degree, made his way to the study and cheated Walter out of the holiday he had expected—a loss which he scarcely regretted in his joy at finding that the wicked poachers had not seriously injured his dear Mr. Arundel. And then Annie could not be happy till she had caught Charles Leicester and made him accompany her on a penitential visit to Lewis, to tell him how grieved she was at the recollection of her injustice to him; it seemed so dreadfully ungrateful, when in fact he had just saved her father's life; and she looked so pretty and good and pure in her penitence, that Lewis began to think women were brighter and higher beings than his philosophy had dreamed of, and for the first time it occurred to him that he had been guilty of an unpardonable absurdity in despising the whole race of womankind because he happened to have been jilted by a little, coquettish, half-educated German girl; and he forgave Annie so fully in his heart that with his lips he could scarcely stammer out half-a-dozen unmeaning words to tell her so.

Leicester asked him in the course of the conversation whether he had any idea which of the gang of poachers had fired the pistol, adding that two others had been taken besides Hardy. Lewis paused for a moment ere he replied, "That his back had been turned towards the man who shot him, and that it was too serious a charge to bring against any one without more certain knowledge than he possessed on the subject." And having said this, he immediately changed the conversation.

As soon as Annie and her cousin withdrew, Millar the gamekeeper made his appearance, full of congratulations on Lewis's gallant conduct and sympathy in regard to his wound.

"I can't imagine vitch o' ther warmints could have had a pistol; it worn't neither o' ther two as we captiwated, for I sarched 'em myself, and never a blessed harticle had they got about 'em except ther usual amount o' bacca and coppers hin ther breeches' pockets."

"Did you have any more fighting after I left you to follow Hardy?" asked Lewis.

"Vell, we did 'ave one more sharpish turn," was the reply. "When the blackguards see me down, they made a rush to recover the sack

with the game, and almost succeeded, only Sam Jones pulled me out of the crowd and set me on my legs again, and I was so mad a-thinking that Hardy had got clear away that I layed about me like one possessed, they do tell me; so we not only recovered the game, but bagged two o' ther chaps themselves. By ther bye," he continued, "Sam Jones came here with me; he wants to see yer when I've done with yer; he says he's picked up somethin' o' yourn, but he won't say what—he's a close chap when he likes, is Sam. Howsomdever, I suppose he expects you'll tip him a bob or so, for it was he as ketched yer when Hardy first flung yer off. You've paid *him* for it sweetly, and no mistake; he'd got a lovely black hye, and his right wrist was swelled as big as two ven we marched him hoff to H—— gaol this morning. And now I'll wish yer good arternoon, Mr. Arundel, and send Sam hup, if you're agreeable."

Lewis, with a smile at the equivocal nature of the phrase, signified his agreeability, and the keeper took his departure. In another minute the sound of heavy footsteps announced the approach of Sam, who, having obeyed Lewis's injunction to "come in," vindicated his title to the attribute of "closeness" by carefully shutting the door and applying first his ear and then his eye to the keyhole ere he could divest his cautious mind of a dread of eavesdroppers. He then crossed the room on tip-toe, partly from a sense of the grave nature of his mysterious errand, partly from respect to the carpet, the richness of which oppressed him heavily during the whole of his visit, restricting him to the use of one leg only the greater portion of the time.

"You have found something of mine, Millar tells me," began Lewis, finding that, ghost-like, his visitor appeared to consider it a point of etiquette not to speak first.

"You're very kind, Mr. Arundel," returned his visitor, who, catching sight at the moment of the gilt frame of an oil painting which hung over the chimney, and believing it firmly to be pure gold, became so overpowered between that and the carpet that he scarcely dared trust himself to speak in such an aristocratic atmosphere. "I'm much obliged to you, sir. Yes, I have found something, sir, but I don't know disactly as it's altogether yourn."

"What is it, my good fellow?" inquired Lewis, half amused and half bored by the man's bashfulness.

A consolatory mistrust of the sterling value of the picture-frame had by this time begun to insinuate itself into Sam's mind, and reassured in some degree by the doubt, he continued—

"I beg pardon, sir, but I hopes you don't feel so bad as might be expected; you looks shocking pale, surely."

Lewis thanked him for his inquiry, and said he believed the wound was going on favourably.

"I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it, which is a mercy to be thankful for; you looking so bad, too," returned this sympathising visitor; then leaning forward so as to approach his lips to Lewis's ear, he continued in a loud whisper—

"Have ye any notion who it was as fired the shot?"

Lewis started, and colouring slightly, fixed his eyes on the man's face as he inquired abruptly—

“Have you?”

Forgetting his veneration for the carpet in the excitement of the conversation, the suspicious under-keeper walked to the door and again tested the keyhole ere he ventured to answer the question; then approaching Lewis, he thrust his hand into a private pocket in his shooting-jacket, and drawing thence something carefully wrapped in a handkerchief, he presented it to the young tutor, saying—

“That's what I've been and found, sir; I picked it up in the wood, not twenty yards from the place where you stood when you was shot, Mr. Arundel.”

Lewis hastily unrolled the handkerchief, and drew from its folds a small pocket-pistol; on the stock, which was richly inlaid, was a silver escutcheon with a coat of arms engraved upon it; from marks about the nipple it had evidently been lately discharged, and on examination it proved to have a *rifle barrel*. Lewis's brow grew dark.

“It is then as I suspected,” he muttered; pausing, however, as a new idea seemed to strike him. “It might be unintentional,” he continued, “the mere result of accident. I must not jump too hastily to such a conclusion;” then addressing the under-keeper, he inquired—

“Have you any idea to whom this pistol belongs?”

“P'raps I may have,” was the cautious reply, “but there's some things it's best not to know—a man might get himself into trouble by being too knowing, you see, Mr. Arundel.”

“Listen to me, my good friend,” returned Lewis, fixing his piercing glance on the man's face: “it is evident you more than suspect who is the owner of this pistol, and you probably are aware by whom, and under what circumstances, it was last night discharged. Now, if through a selfish dread of consequences you wish to keep this knowledge to yourself, why come here and show me the pistol? If, on the contrary, you wish to enhance the value of your information in order to make a more profitable bargain with me, you are only wasting time. I am naturally anxious to know who wounded me, and whether the deed was accidental or intentional; therefore, you have but to name your price, and if I can afford it I will give it you. I say this because I can conceive no other reason for your shilly-shallying.”

During this speech the unfortunate Sam Jones shifted uneasily from leg to leg, dropped his cap, stooped to pick it up again, bit his under-lip with shame and indecision, and at last exclaimed—

“Bless'd if I can stand this hany longer! out it must come, and if I loses my sitation through it, I suppose there's other places to be got; they can't say nuffin against my character, that's one comfort. It ain't your money I wants, Mr. Arundel, sir; I'm able and willin' to earn my own livin'; but I've got a good place here, and don't wish to offend nobody: still right is right, and knowing what I knows, my conscience wouldn't let me rest till I'd come and told you—only I thort if you would ha' guessed it of yourself like, nothing needn't ha' come out about me in the matter.”

“I understand,” returned Lewis with a contemptuous curl of the

lip; "I will take care not to commit you in any way; so speak out."

"Well, if you remember, sir, I went with you and Millar up to the barley-stack last night, and when you grabbed hold of Hardy he sung out to the chap as was with him to come and help him, so I thort the best thing for me was to pitch into him and prevent his doing so. Well, I hadn't much trouble with him, for he was a shocking poor hand with his fists, and as soon as I'd polished him off I turned to lend you a help; just at that minute I see the moon a-shining upon something bright, and looking further, I perceived the figure of a man crouching close to the stack with a cocked pistol in his hand. When fust I see him the pistol was pointed at Hardy, but suddenly he changed his aim and fired straight at you; as he let fly, the moon-light fell upon his face, and if ever a man looked like a devil he did then."

"And it was——?" asked Lewis eagerly.

"Lord Bellefield!" was the reply; "there's none of 'em wears hair on their top lip except the young lord, so it ain't easy to mistake him, ye see."

"Are you quite sure he changed the direction of the pistol? Might not the shot have been intended for Hardy?"

"I'll take my oath it worn't, Mr. Arundel; he pointed it straight at your breast, and if Hardy hadn't given a sudden wrench at the minute and dragged you out of the line of fire, you'd have been a dead man long before this."

Seeing that Lewis continued silent, the keeper resumed—

"As soon as you was hit you let go and Hardy threw you off. I caught you, expecting it was all up with you, but I still kept my eye on his lordship, for I was curious to know how he'd act. When he saw you fall he smiled, and then he looked more like a devil than he had done before. As Hardy was a-cutting away he passed close to Lord Bellefield and struck against his shoulder, accidentally, and his lordship in a rage flung the discharged pistol after him, and it would ha' fetched him down too if it hadn't a-hit against a branch. However, I marked where it fell pretty nigh, and as soon as it was light this morning I went and found it. There's his lordship's arms upon it, same as them on his pheaton."

Completely overpowered and amazed at this recital, Lewis, desiring to be alone with his own thoughts, obtained from Sam Jones a promise of the strictest secrecy in regard to the affair, and having liberally rewarded him for his discreet behaviour, dismissed him. He then, concealing the pistol in his pocket, withdrew to the privacy of his own apartment, and locking the door, sat down to collect his ideas. At first he could scarcely realise the fact with which he had become acquainted. True, he had suspected that it was from Lord Bellefield's hand that he had received his wound, for he had previously observed the butt of a pistol protruding from a pocket in his lordship's great-coat, his attention being particularly called to the fact by the eagerness with which its owner immediately hastened to conceal it more effectually. Still, he had believed that he had been wounded by an

accident, and that the shot had been fired with the intention of disabling Hardy, in whose capture Lord Bellefield appeared, for some mysterious reason, to be deeply interested. The account he had just received proved that this was evidently not the case, and Lewis could only conjecture that at the moment Lord Bellefield was about to shoot Hardy some fiend had suggested to him the opportunity of an easy revenge on the man he hated, and that, in an impulse of ungovernable malice, he had altered the direction of the pistol.

Rising and opening his dressing-case, Lewis took from a secret drawer the ball which had been extracted from his shoulder, and drawing the pistol out of his pocket, tried it; it fitted the barrel to a nicety. Replacing it, he muttered, "There is then *no* doubt." He paused, but immediately resumed, "'Tis well; he has now filled up the measure of his guilt; the time is come to balance the account." His intention at that moment was to seek out Lord Bellefield, upbraid him with his treachery, threaten to expose him, and demand as a right that he should afford him satisfaction, forcing him by some means to meet him on the following morning. But even when carried away by passion, Lewis was not utterly forgetful of the feelings of others, and his friendship for Leicester and for Annie, consideration for the General in his present situation, and the interest he took in Walter, rose up before him, and he exclaimed—

"No, it is impossible; a thousand reasons forbid it while I remain under this roof. I must break off all intercourse with this family before I seek my just revenge. Well, the day of retribution is postponed then, perhaps for years; but it will come at last, I know; I feel that it will. That man is a part of my destiny. With what pertinacity he hates me! He fears me, too; he has done so ever since that affair of the glove. He read in my eyes that I had resolved on—on what? What will all this lead to? Am I at heart a murderer?" He sat down, for he was very weak, and trembled so violently from the intensity of his feelings that his knees refused to support him.

"No!" he continued, "it is an act of justice. This man insulted me—I bore it patiently; at least I did not actively resent it. He repeated his injurious conduct, he heaped insult on insult—I warned him; he knew what he was doing; he saw the fiend he was arousing in me, but he persevered—even yet I strove to forgive him; yes, for the sake of his brother's kindness to me, for the sake of the fair girl who is betrothed to him, I had almost resolved to forego my right to punish him. Then he seeks my life, the cowardly assassin! and in so doing he has sealed his own doom." He rose and paced sternly up and down the apartment. "Frere would say," he resumed, "Frere would say that I ought to forgive him yet, but he would be wrong. He would quote the Scriptures that we should forgive a brother 'till seventy times seven.' Yes, *if* he turn and repent; repented sins only are forgiven either in heaven or on earth. Does this man repent? let him tell me so, and I will give him my hand in friendship; but if he glories in his wickedness? why then the old Hebrew law stands good, 'An eye for an eye.' He owes me a life already, and if I offer him fair combat, I give him a chance to which in strict justice he has

no right; but *I* am no mean assassin. And now to return his pistol and inform his lordship that I am aware of the full extent of my obligations to him."

So saying, he drew pen and ink towards him and hastily wrote as follows:—

"Mr. Arundel presents his compliments to Lord Bellefield, and begs to return the pistol with which he did him the honour to attempt his life in the wood last night. Mr. Arundel reserves the pleasure of *returning the shot* till some future opportunity."

He then rolled up the note, and inserting it in the barrel of the pistol, formed the whole into a small parcel, which he carefully sealed, and ringing for Lord Bellefield's valet, desired him to lay it on his master's dressing-table before he prepared for dinner.

Reader, when your eye falls upon this page, which lays bare the heart of one whom we would fain depict, not as a mere picturesque brain-creation of impossible virtues and startling faults, but as an erring mortal like ourselves, swayed by the same passions, subject to the same influences for good or for evil—when you perceive how this one wrong feeling, permitted to take root in his mind, grew and flourished, till it so warped his frank, generous nature, that the fiend of sophistry, quoting scripture to his purpose, could blind his sense of right with such shallow reasoning as the foregoing,—resolve, if a single revengeful feeling lurk serpent-like in your bosom, to cast it from you at whatever sacrifice, lest when you pray "Our Father" which is in heaven to "forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive them that trespass against us," you unawares pronounce your own condemnation.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONTAINS SUNDRY DEFINITIONS OF WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE,
AND DISCLOSES MRS. ARUNDEL'S OPINION OF RICHARD FRERE.

LEWIS did not obtain any answer to his polite note, as Lord Bellefield received on the following morning letters which he said required his immediate presence in London, and in the hurry of departure he no doubt forgot to refute the charge Lewis had seen fit to bring against him; and as the young tutor preserved a strict silence on the subject, and Sam Jones kept his own counsel with his accustomed closeness, there, for the present, the matter appeared likely to rest. Some little surprise was caused in the village by the sudden disappearance of Jane Hardy, the poacher's daughter, a girl of about nineteen; but as it was imagined she had gone to take up her quarters in the town of H—, where her father was imprisoned, her absence was soon forgotten. Lewis and Charles Leicester alone, having ascertained her identity with the young person who had assisted in the refreshment-room on the night of

the party, connected her flight with Lord Bellefield's abrupt departure, and although the subject was, for obvious reasons, avoided between them, little doubt remained on their minds as to her probable fate. This occurrence afforded Lewis a clue to Lord Bellefield's sudden interest in regard to Hardy's capture: by her father's imprisonment would be removed the chief impediment to the success of his designs upon the daughter. The event had proved the correctness of his calculation.

Weeks passed on; the wound in Lewis's shoulder healed, despite the aggravating attendance of Doctors Scalpel and Bistoury, and with youth and health on his side he speedily regained his accustomed vigour. General Grant's recovery was a matter of greater difficulty. The fracture had been by no means easily reduced, and the process by which the bones re-united was a long and tedious one. His accident (as is usually the case with such events) had occurred at a most inconvenient moment. While he was yet confined to his room the election for the county came on, and his opponent, taking advantage of his absence to undermine his influence with the voters, was returned by a large majority. The bribery by which he had obtained his seat was, however, a matter of such notoriety, that, by De Grandeville's advice, the General was induced to petition Parliament to annul the election. The petition failed, and the expenses, which, from the prolonged proceedings, were unusually heavy, all fell upon the unsuccessful candidate. During the progress of the affair, Lewis, by the General's wish, acted as his amanuensis and private secretary, a confidential servant being engaged to wait on Walter and attend him during his rides, thus relieving his tutor of much that was irksome in his situation. The London season was at its height before General Grant had recovered sufficiently to leave Broadhurst, but a fortnight before the day on which Charles Leicester's wedding was fixed to take place Annie and her father started for the great metropolis.

During his attendance on the General, Lewis had been thrown much into Annie's society, and their intimacy had deepened, on the lady's side, into feelings of the warmest esteem and friendship, while the gentleman became more and more convinced that his previous estimate of the fair sex was a completely mistaken one, and altogether to be condemned as the weakest and most fallacious theory that ever entered the brain of a hot-headed boy—by which opprobrious epithet he mentally stigmatised his six-months-ago self—and for at least a week after she had departed he felt as if something had gone wrong with the sun, so that it never shone properly.

The General had been away about a fortnight, when Lewis received a letter from Rose informing him for the first time of her literary pursuits. Since we have last heard of this young lady she had been growing decidedly blue. Not only had she, under Bracy's auspices, published a series of papers in Blunt's Magazine, but she had positively written a child's book, which, although it contained original ideas, good sense, and warm feeling, instead of second-hand moral platitudes, and did not take that particularly natural view of life

which represents it as a system of temporal rewards and punishments, wherein the praiseworthy elder sister is always recompensed with an evangelical young duke, and the naughty boys are invariably drowned on clandestine skating expeditions, yet found an enterprising publisher willing to purchase it; nay, so well did it answer, that the courageous bibliopolist had actually expressed a wish to confer with the "talented authoress," as he styled poor Rose, in regard to a second work. Whereupon Frere despatched a note to that young lady, telling her she had better come up to town at once, offering her the use of his house in a rough and ready way, just as if he had been writing to a man; and though he did add in a postscript that if she fancied she should be dull, she'd better bring her mother with her, the after-thought was quite as likely to have arisen from sheer good-nature, as from any, even the most faint, glimmering of etiquette. Owing to a judicious hint thrown out by Bracy, however, an invitation arrived, at the same time, from Lady Lombard, which Mrs. Arundel had immediately decided on accepting, and the object of Rose's letter was to inquire whether there was the slightest hope of Lewis being able to meet them.

By the same post arrived a note written by Annie from her father's dictation, saying that he found he was quite unable to get on without Mr. Arundel's assistance; that he considered change of scene might prove beneficial to Walter, and that it was therefore his wish that Lewis and his pupil should join them immediately after the bustle of the wedding should be over; which scheme chimed in with the young tutor's wishes most admirably, and for the rest of the morning he was so happy as to be quite unlike his usual grave and haughty self, and astonished Faust to such a degree by placing his fore-paws against his own chest, and in that position constraining him to waltz round the room on his hind-legs, that the worthy dog would have assuredly taken out a statute of lunacy against his master had he been aware of the existence of such a process.

Those who witnessed the marriage of the Hon. Charles Leicester to the lovely and accomplished daughter of the late Peregrine Peyton, Esq., of Stockington Manor, in the county of Lancashire (they said nothing of Ludgate Hill and ignored Plumpstern totally), describe it to have been a truly edifying ceremony. The fatal knot was tied, and the wretched pair launched into a married state by the Bishop of L—, the unhappy victims submitting to their fate with unexampled fortitude and resignation, and the female spectators evincing by their tears that the lesson to be derived from the awful tragedy enacting before them would not be thrown away upon them. Nor were the good intentions thus formed allowed to swell the list of "unredeemed pledges" whence that prince of pawnbrokers, Satan, is popularly supposed to select his paving materials, as, during the ball which concluded the evening, two fine young men of property fell victims to premature declarations, and after a rapid decline from the ways of good fellowship were carried off by matrimony, and departed this (*i.e.*, fashionable) life in less than two months after their first seizure.

On Lewis's arrival in town he found a small packet directed to him in Leicester's handwriting, containing, besides the glazed cards lovingly coupled by silver twist, a remarkably elegant gold watch and chain for the waistcoat pocket, together with a few lines from Charley himself, saying that to Lewis's good advice and plain speaking he felt he in a great measure owed his present happiness, and that he hoped Lewis would wear the enclosed trifle, the joint gift of himself and Laura, to remind him of their mutual friendship and regard. Had he known that Annie Grant had noticed the fact of his not possessing a watch, and suggested the nature of the gift to her cousin, he would have valued it even more highly than he did.

The happy pair had determined to test the endurance of their felicity by starting for the Rhine, which popular river it was their intention to go up as far as it was go-up-able, then proceed to Switzerland, do that land of musical cows and icy mountains thoroughly, and finally take up their quarters at Florence, where Leicester had succeeded in obtaining a diplomatic appointment. A letter had been received from them dated Coblenz, wherein it appeared their new-found happiness had stood the voyage better than might have been expected; a fact mainly attributable to their having had an unusually calm passage. Laura considered the Rhine scenery exquisite; Charley thought it all very well for a change; but for a constancy, he must confess he preferred the Serpentine. He was disgusted with the German students, whom he stigmatised as "awful tigers," wondered why the women wore short petticoats if they hadn't better ankles to show, complained bitterly of the intense stupidity of the natives for not understanding either French or English, and wound up by a long, violent sentence quite unconnected with all that had gone before it, setting forth his unalterable conviction that Laura was an angel, which unscriptural assertion he reiterated four times in as many lines.

A change had taken place in Rose Arundel, and Lewis, as he gazed with affection on her calm, pensive brow, and marked the earnest, thoughtful expression of her soft, grey eyes, felt that she was indeed altered: he had left her little more than a child, he found her a woman in the best and fullest sense of the expression. Reader, do you know all that phrase implies? do you understand what is meant by a woman in the true and fullest sense of the term?

"Eh? I should rather think I did, too, just a *very* little," replies Ensign Downlip, winking at society at large; "know what a woman is? yes, I consider that good, rather."

"And what, oh! most exquisite juvenile, may be your definition of woman as she should be?"

The Ensign strokes his upper lip where that confounded moustache is so very "lang a comin'," rubs his nose to arouse his intellect, which he fails to do because that faculty is not asleep but wanting, and replies—

"Ar—well, to begin with: woman is of course a decidedly inferior animal, but—ar—take the best specimen of the class, and you'll find it vewy pwitty, picquante, devoted to polking, light in hand, clean about the pasterns, something like Fanny Elsler, with a dash of Lady —"

to give it style (I can't stand vulgawity), decidedly fast (I hate your cart-horsey gals)! plenty of bustle to make it look spicy, ready to go the pace no end, and able properly to—ahem! appreciate 'Yours truly'—ar—that's about the time of day, eh, Mr. Author!"

"No such thing, sir," replies Cœrulea Scribbler, who is so very superior that she is momentarily expected to regenerate society single-handed, "no such thing, sir! I know what the author means: he justly considers woman as a—that is, as *the* concentrated essence of mind; nothing low, base, earthy—but—in fact—definitions should be terse—you'll excuse my mathematical tastes, but—ahem!—three terms at Queen's College, and that dear Professor Baa-lamb! naturally produce a logical habit of thought—you require a perfect woman."

"No, madam, I am not so unreasonable."

"I mean, you require a definition of a perfect woman; here you have it then—the maximum of mind united to the minimum of matter; or, to speak poetically, a 'thing all soul.'" And having thus given her opinion, Miss Cœrulea, who measures barely five feet, and is as thin as a lath, shakes her straw-coloured ringlets and subsides into the Sixth Book of Euclid.

But neither the red-jacket nor the blue-stocking, albeit each the type of a not unnumerous class, has exactly answered our question as we would wish it replied to. We do not agree with Charley Leicester in considering woman an angel; first, because our ideas with regard to angels are excessively vague and undefined, wings and white drapery being the only marked features which we have as yet succeeded in realising; and secondly, because, to verify the resemblance, woman should be faultless, and we have never yet met with one who had not some fascinating little sin left to show that she was not too good for this world. Our notion of a woman, in the best sense of the word, is a being fitted to be a helpmeet for man; and this would lead us into another disquisition, which we will dismiss summarily by stating that we mean a man worthy of the name, not an ape in a red-coat like Ensign Downylyp, or an owl in a sad-coloured one like Professor Baalamb, but a man whom it would not be mere satire to call a lord of the creation. A helpmeet for such an one as this should possess a clear, acute intellect, or she would be unable to comprehend his aspirations after the good, and true, and beautiful—the efforts of his fallen nature to regain somewhat of its original rank in the scale of created beings. She should have a faithful, loving heart, that when, foiled in his worldly career, his spirit is dark within him, and in the bitterness of his soul he confesses that "the good that he would he does not, but the evil he would not, that he does," her affection may prove to him that in her love he has one inestimable blessing yet remaining, of which death alone can deprive him, and then only for a season; for, availing herself of the fitting moment with the delicate tact which is one of the brightest instincts of a loving woman's heart, she can offer him the only true consolation, by urging him to renew his Christian warfare in the hope that *together* they may attain the reward of their high calling, a reward so glorious that the mind of man is impotent to conceive its nature. But to be able to do this she

must herself have realised, by the power of faith, the blessedness of things unseen, and with this requisite, without which all other excellencies are valueless, we conclude our definition of "woman as she should be."

Such an one was Rose Arundel, and countless others are there who, if not sinless as the radiant messengers of heaven, are yet doing angels' work by many a fireside which their presence cheers and blesses. Happy is the man who possesses in a wife or sister such a household fairy; and if some there be who bear alone the burden of life—whose joys are few, for we rejoice not in solitude—let those whose lot is brighter forgive the clouded brow or the cynical word that at times attests the weariness of a soul on which the sunlight of affection seldom beams.

No particular alteration was observable in Mrs. Arundel, who seemed to possess the enviable faculty of never growing older, and who remained just as gay and sparkling as when at sixteen she had enslaved the fancy rather than the heart of Captain Arundel.

"My dear Lewis," she exclaimed, after having asked a hundred questions in a breath regarding the internal economy of General Grant's family, the affray with the poachers, Charles Leicester's wedding, and every other event, grave or otherwise, which occurred to her active and versatile mind, "my dear Lewis, what an original your friend Frere is! excessively kind and good-natured, but so very odd. He volunteered to come and meet us at the coach-office, which I considered quite a work of supererogation; but Rose had imbibed such a mistrust of London and its inhabitants, whom she expected to eat her up bodily, I believe, that she persuaded me to accept his offer. Well, when the coach arrived I looked about, but nobody did I see who at all coincided with my preconceived ideas of Mr. Frere, and I began to think he would prove faithless, when I descried an individual in a vile hat and an old, rough greatcoat perched on a pile of luggage, with a cotton umbrella between his knees, reading some dirty little book, in which he appeared completely immersed. He took not the slightest notice of the bustle and confusion going on around him, and would, I believe, have sat there until now, if a porter, carrying a heavy trunk, had not all but fallen over him; upon which he started up, and for the first time perceiving the coach, exclaimed, 'By Jove, there's the very thing I am waiting for!' then shouldering his umbrella, he advanced to the window, and thrusting in his great head, growled out, 'Are any of you Miss Arundel?' Rose answered the question, for I was so taken by surprise that I was dying with laughter. As soon as he had ascertained our identity, he continued, 'Well, then I should say the sooner you're out of this the better. I'll call a cab.' The moment it drew up he flung open the door, and exclaiming, 'Now, come along,' he caught hold of Rose as if she'd been a carpet-bag, dragged her out, and pushed her by main force into the cab."

"Oh, mamma," interrupted Rose apologetically, "you really colour the matter too highly. Mr. Frere was as kind as possible. He was a little rough, certainly, and seemed to think I must be as helpless as a child; but I dare say he's not accustomed to act as squire to dames."

"Indeed he's not," resumed Mrs. Arundel. "But I was determined he shouldn't paw me about like a bale of goods, so I rested my hand on a porter's shoulder and sprang from the coach into the cab while he was stooping to pick up his wretched umbrella; and finely astonished he looked, too, when he discovered what I had done. Then he dragged down all the luggage, just as he had done Rose, and tried to put two trunks that did not belong to us on the cab, only I raved at him till I obliged him to relinquish them. Of course I was forced to offer him a seat in the cab, but he coolly replied, 'No, thank ye; there are too many handboxes—the squares of their bases occupy the entire area. I'll sit beside cabby.' And to my horror he scrambled up to the driving-seat, and taking the dirty book out of his pocket, was speedily absorbed in its contents; and in this state we actually drove up to Lady Lombard's door. I could have beaten the man, I was so angry with him. And yet, with it all, the creature is a gentleman."

"Indeed he is," returned Lewis, "a thorough gentleman in mind, though from the extent to which he is engrossed by his literary and scientific pursuits, and from the fact of living so much alone, he has not the manners of society. But Frere is a very first-rate man; his is no ordinary intellect."

"It is impossible to watch the play of his features and doubt that for a moment," returned Rose eagerly. "Look at his speaking eye—his noble forehead."

"Oh! Rose is quite *emprise* with the monster," remarked Mrs. Arundel, laughing. "It's a decided case of love at first sight. Was it the old greatcoat, or the dreadful hat, which first touched your heart, *ma chère?*"

"I'm not bound to criminate myself," was the reply, "so I shall decline to answer that question."

While she spoke a short, sharp, double knock, as of an agitated postman, awoke the echoes and the porter in Lady Lombard's "Marble Hall." In another minute the Brobdignagian footman, with prize calves to his legs, flung open the drawing-room door and announced, in a stentorian voice, "Mr. Frere."

"*Quand on parle du diable on en voit la queue,*" whispered Mrs. Arundel, rising quickly. "Positively, Rose, my nerves won't stand the antics of your pet bear this morning. Let me see you again before you go, *Louis, mon cher*—you'll find me in the boudoir."

So saying, she glided noiselessly out of one door a moment before Frere entered at the other. Lewis followed her retreating figure with a glance half-painful, half-amused. "My mother grows younger and more gay every time I see her," he observed to Rose. A speaking glance was her only answer, for at the moment Frere made his appearance—and a somewhat singular one it was. The day being fine, he had discarded the obnoxious greatcoat, and—thanks to his old female domestic, who had caught him going out with a large hole in his sleeve and sent him back to put on another garment, which she herself selected—the coat he wore was in unusually good preservation, and not so very much too large for him; but the heavy shoes, the worsted stockings, the shepherd's plaid trousers, and the cotton

umbrella were all *in statu quo*; while his bright eyes, sparkling out of a greater bush than ever of untrimmed hair and whiskers, gave him a striking resemblance to some honest Scotch terrier, worthy to be immortalised by Landseer's pencil. Catching sight of Lewis, he rushed towards him, and seizing both his hands (in order to accomplish which act of friendship he allowed the umbrella to fall on Rose's toes), he shook them heartily, exclaiming, "Why, Lewis, old boy! this *is* a pleasure! I hadn't a notion you would be here so soon. How's General Grant? and how's Walter? and how's Faust? and how's everybody? Well, I *am* glad to see you!"

All this time Frere had taken not the slightest notice of Rose, who, having advanced a step or two to greet him, had resumed her seat, more pleased to witness his delight in welcoming Lewis than any attentions to herself could have rendered her. Having seated himself on a sofa and pulled Lewis down by his side, he for the first time appeared aware of Rose's presence, which he hastened to acknowledge by a nod, adding, "Ah! how d'ye do? I've got something to tell you presently, as soon as I've done with your brother."

Then, turning to Lewis, he recommenced his string of questions, without regarding Rose's presence otherwise than by occasionally including her in the conversation with such interjectional remarks as "You can understand that"—"I explained that to *you* the other day," until at length he abruptly exclaimed, "Now I must go and talk to *her*—she and I have got a little business together."

"Perhaps I am *de trop*," observed Lewis with a meaning smile.

In reply to this Frere merely clenched his fist, and having shaken it within an inch of Lewis's face, marched deliberately across the room, and drawing a chair close to Rose, seated himself in it; then laying hold of one corner of her worsted work, he said in a gruff voice, "Put away this rubbish."

"I can listen to you, Mr. Frere, and go on with my slipper at the same time," returned Rose, quietly releasing her work.

"You can't do two things properly together," was the reply; "nobody can; for it's all fudge about Cæsar's reading and dictating at the same time. What I've got to tell you is more important than a carpet shoe."

Smiling at his pertinacity, Rose, not having a particle of obstinacy in her disposition, put away her work, and demurely crossing her hands before her, like a good child saying its lessons, awaited her tyrant's orders. That her attitude was not lost upon Frere that gentleman made evident by catching Lewis's eye and pointing backwards with his thumb, as much as to say, "There! do you see that?" then producing a note from his pocket, he coolly broke the seal, opened it, and handing it to Rose, muttered, "Read that."

The note ran as follows:—

"Mr. T. Bracy presents his compliments to Miss Arundel, and begs to enclose a note of introduction to Mr. Nonpareil, the publisher, as Mr. Frere agrees in thinking that the offer made by Mr. A—, of

B— Street, for the copyright of her interesting tale was quite inadequate to its merits."

"How very kind of Mr. Bracy!" exclaimed Rose, handing the note to her brother, Frere having quietly read it over her shoulder. "Lewis, I must ask you to be good enough to go with me to Mr. Nonpareil's whenever you can spare the time."

"You needn't trouble him," returned Frere gruffly; "I mean to take you there myself; and as there's never any good in putting things off, I vote we go this morning. What do you say?"

"You are very kind," replied Rose, smiling; "but really, now my brother is in town I need not encroach on your valuable time."

"Valuable fiddlestick!" was the courteous reply; "though, of course, everybody's time is valuable, if people did but know how to employ it properly—which they never do. But you don't suppose if I'd anything very particular in hand I should be dawdling here, do you? I've got to be at the Ornithological at four, and to call at Moore's, the bird-stuffer's, first; but I can look in there on our way to Nonpareil's."

"Yes; but I'm sure Lewis——" began Rose in a deprecatory tone of voice.

"Nonsense about Lewis!" was the surly rejoinder. "What do you imagine he knows about dealing with publishers?—they're 'kittle cattle to shoe behind,' as a Scotchman would say. I've had dealings enough with 'em to find out that, I can tell you. As for Lewis, if he were to walk into one of their dens with his head up in the air, they'd take him for Lord Octavo Shallowpate, come to negotiate for another new novel, written with a paste-pot and scissors, and when they found he had not a handle to his name with which to shove his rubbish down the public throat, they'd kick him out of the shop again."

"Then you really think I look as stupid as a literary lord, eh, Frere?" inquired Lewis.

"Well, that's too strong a term, perhaps," answered Frere reflectively; "but you don't look like a man of business, at all events."

"Where does this sagacious publisher reside?" asked Lewis; and when Frere had given him the required information, he continued: "Then we'll settle the matter thus:—My tailor, with whom I am anxious to gain an interview, lives in the adjoining street; accordingly, I'll walk down with Rose and you, and while you negotiate with the autocrat of folios, I'll take 'fitting measures' for getting myself 'neatly bound in cloth.'"

"So be it then, most facetious youth," returned Frere, laughing; "and the faster you can get ready, you know," he continued, turning to Rose, "the better."

"I'm all obedience," replied Rose, smiling; "but I think you're rather fond of tyrannising, Mr. Frere."

"Who, I?" returned Frere in astonishment. "Not a bit of it; I'm the most easily managed fellow in London—I am, upon my word."

"You should see what perfect command his old housekeeper has

him in," observed Lewis, with an arch glance at his sister; "the bear dares not growl at her—she's a perfect Van Amburgh to him."

Now there was so much truth in this charge that it was rather a sore subject with Frere. The old woman in question had lived with his mother and had nursed him when a child; and for these reasons, as well as from good nature and a certain easiness of disposition which lay beneath his rough manner, Frere had allowed her gradually to usurp control over him, till, in all the minutiae of his domestic life, she ruled him with a rod of iron. Although her admiration of and respect for her master's learning was fully equal to her total ignorance of the arts and sciences; and although her affection for him was boundless, nature had gifted her with a crusty temper, which an interval of poverty and hardship (extending from the death of Frere's mother till the time when his first act on obtaining a competence had been to seek her out and take her into his service) had not tended to sweeten. The dialogues which occasionally took place between the master and servant were most amusing, and her power over him was exercised so openly, that his fear of Jemima had become a standing joke among his intimates. Accordingly, on hearing Lewis's observation, Frere hastily jumped up and strode to the fireplace, muttering, "Nonsense! psha! rubbish! don't you believe a word of it, Miss Arundel; but go and dress, there's a good——" he was going to add "fellow"; for be it known, the clue to his gruff, unpolished behaviour towards the young lady in question was to be discovered in the fact, that from her quiet composure, freedom from affectation, clear, good sense, and the interest she took in subjects usually considered too abstruse for female investigation, Frere looked upon her as a kindred soul, and as all his other chosen intimates were of the worthier gender, he was continually forgetting that she was not a man. Checking himself, however, just in time, he substituted "creature" for "fellow"; and as Rose left the room, he continued, "'Pon my word, Lewis, your sister's such a nice, sensible, well-informed, reasonable being, that I am constantly forgetting she's a woman."

"Which speech shows that amongst your numerous studies that of the female character has been neglected," replied Lewis; "or that you have taken your impressions from very bad specimens of the sex."

Frere, who during the above remark had drawn from his pocket a lump of crumbling sandstone, which, in order to examine more closely, he coolly deposited on a small satin-wood work-table, looked up in surprise as he rejoined, "Your opinions, touching the merits of womankind, seem to have suffered a recovery, young man, seeing that the last time I had the honour of discussing the matter with you, women were all perfidious hyænas, or thereabouts. What has wrought so remarkable a transformation?"

Something appeared to have suddenly gone wrong with Lewis's boot, for it was not until he had thoroughly investigated the matter that he replied, his face being still bent over the offending article, "The simple fact that as one grows older one grows wiser, I suppose. No doubt Gretchen behaved abominably, and rendered me for the time intensely wretched; but it was folly in me ever to have placed

my happiness in the power of such a little, romantic, flirting, half-educated thing as she was; I should not do so now, and to argue from such an individual instance, to the disparagement of the whole sex, was one of the maddest notions that ever entered the brain of a hot-headed boy."

"Phew!" whistled Frere in astonishment, "you are not over civil to your former self, I must say. If anybody else had spoken so disrespectfully of you you'd have been for punching his head for him; however, I believe your present frame of mind is the more sane of the two, though sweeping assertions are always more or less untenable. The truth is, you can lay down no general rule about it—women are human as well as men; there are a few very good, a few very bad, and an immense number who are nothing particular, in both sexes. There is no authority which would lead us to suppose Adam's rib was made of ivory more than any of his other bones. There's one vice belonging to the fair sex, though—they're always an unmerciful time putting on their bonnets; your sister's been five minutes already, and I'd lay a bet we don't see her for five more." As he uttered the last words, Rose, fully equipped and looking the picture of neatness, tripped into the room, to Frere's intense discomfiture, who scrambled his relic of the Era of the Old Red Sandstone into his pocket with the air of some culprit schoolboy detected in his malpractices by the vigilant eye of his pedagogue.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROSE AND FRERE GO TO VISIT MR. NONPAREIL THE PUBLISHER.

LEWIS, having slipped away for a moment to take leave of Mrs. Arundel, who dismissed him with a parting injunction to take care Ursa Major did not devour Rose, the trio descended the stairs, Frere taking an opportunity to whisper to Lewis, "She was down upon me then in every sense of the word; didn't believe a woman could get ready in five minutes on any consideration; but your sister has more sense than I ever expected to see under a bonnet, that's a fact."

"Don't you think for once you could dispense with that dreadful umbrella?" inquired Lewis, who had imbibed a few Leicestrian prejudices from his residence at Broadhurst.

"Dreadful umbrella! why what's the matter with it?" exclaimed Frere, half unfurling his favourite; "it's water-tight, and has a famous strong stick to it; what more do you want in an umbrella, eh?"

"It might have been made of silk," suggested Lewis mildly.

"Yes, and be stolen and brought back again regularly three times a week," returned Frere. "I had a silk one once, and the expense that umbrella was to me, to say nothing of the wear and tear of mind it occasioned, was perfectly terrific. I shudder when I think of it; there are not a dozen cabmen in London who have not received half-a-crown

for bringing home that umbrella. It was a regular bottle-imp to me, always being lost and always coming back again. The 'bus conductors knew it by sight as well as they know the Bank; they were for ever laying traps to get it into their possession, with a view to obtain the reward of honesty by bringing it home again. I got rid of it at last, though; I lent it to a fellow who owed me five pounds, and I've never seen man, money, or umbrella since. Now this dear old cotton thing, not being worth finding, has never been lost; however, if you'll promise to take care I have it to-morrow when I call, I'll leave it here, and if your sister gets wet don't blame me."

"Rose, will you undertake the heavy responsibility?" asked Lewis.

"I think I may safely promise so to do," was the reply. "There is a little foot page in this establishment in whom I have the greatest confidence, and to his custody will I commit it."

And Frere's anxious mind being soothed by this assurance, they started on their expedition. Twenty minutes' brisk walking—which would have been brisker still if Rose had not gently hinted that ladies were not usually accustomed to stride along like postmen; to which suggestion Frere responded with something very like a growl,—twenty minutes' walking brought them to the very elegant front of Mr. Nonpareil's shop, where Lewis left the two others. A nice young man, with Hyperion curls outside his head, and nothing save much too high an opinion of himself within, who lounged gracefully behind the counter, replied to Frere's inquiry "Whether Mr. Nonpareil was at home," after the fashion of the famous Irish echo, *i.e.*, by another question. Elevating his eyebrows till they almost disappeared in his forest of hair, he drawled out—

"Wh-a-y? did you w-a-ant him?"

"Of course I did, or else I should not have asked for him," returned Frere sharply; then handing his own card and Bracy's note of introduction across the counter, he continued, "Take those to your *master*, and tell him that a lady and gentleman are waiting to see him."

At the word "master" Hyperion coloured and appeared about to become impertinent, but something in Frere's look induced him to alter his intention, and turning on his heel, he strode into the back shop with an *air martyre*, which was deeply affecting to the risible muscles of the pair he left behind him.

"There's an animal!" exclaimed Frere, as the subject of his remark disappeared behind a tall column of account books. "Now that ape looks upon himself as a sort of Admirable Crichton, and I'll be bound has a higher opinion of his own mental endowments than ever Shakespeare or Milton had of theirs. I dare say the creature has his admirers, too: some subordinate shop boy, or the urchin who runs of errands, takes him at his own price and believes in him implicitly. Ye gods, what a 'ship of fools' is this goodly vessel of society!"

"I hope he does not rest his claims on the ground of his personal attractions," returned Rose with a quiet smile.

"His strength must lie in his hair, if he does," replied Frere, "like that of his Israelitish Hercules of old. But see, here he comes,

shaking his ambrosial locks ; and behold, he smiles graciously upon us. Bracy's note has worked miracles."

Approaching with a smirk and a bow, Hyperion politely signified that Mr. Nonpareil was disengaged, then again retreating, led the way through a sort of defile of unsold literature to the sanctum of the enterprising publisher. This remarkable apartment was of the most minute dimensions, a very duodecimo edition of a room, embellished with a miniature fireplace, an infinitesimal writing-table, and a mere peep-hole of a window looking across many chimney-pots into space. In the middle of this retreat of learning, like an oyster in its shell, reposed that Rhadamanthus of literature—the heroic Nonpareil. His outer man was encased in black, as became the severity of his office ; a white neck-cloth encircled his august throat, while a heavy gold watch-chain and seals attested his awful respectability. He was of a most respectable age, neither incautiously young nor unadvisedly old ; he was of a most respectable height, neither absurdly short nor inconveniently tall ; his weight, 12 stone 6 lbs., was most respectable—it had not varied a pound for the last ten years, nor could one look at him without feeling that it would remain exactly the same for the next ten years ; he had a most respectable complexion, red enough to indicate that he lived well and that it agreed with him, but nothing more. Nobody could suspect that man of an apoplectic tendency ; he was much too respectable to think of dying suddenly ; the very expression of his face was a sort of perpetual life assurance ; *he* go out of the world without advertising the day on which he might be expected to appear most respectably bound in boards ! The idea was preposterous. His manner naturally expressed his conviction of his own intense respectability, and was impressive, not to say pompous ; while from a sense of the comparative want of respectability in everybody else it was also familiar, or as his enemies (all great men have enemies) declared, presuming.

As Rose and Frere entered he stood up to receive them, favoured Frere with a salutation half-way between a bow and a nod, partially extended his hand to Rose, and as she hesitated in surprise, hastily drew it back again, then motioning them to the only two chairs, save his own judgment-seat, the apartment contained, resumed his throne, and smiling graciously at Rose, leant back, waiting apparently until that young lady should humbly prefer her suit to him.

Perceiving his design, Rose glanced appealingly at Frere, who came to her assistance by plunging at once in *medias res* with his accustomed bluntness.

"Well, Mr. Nonpareil," he began, "touching the object of our visit to you, I suppose Bracy has told you in his note what we've come about?"

"Yes—that is, so far ; Mr. Bracy signifies that your visit has a business tendency," was the cautious reply.

"Why, we certainly should not have come here for pleasure," returned Frere shortly ; then catching Rose's look of dismay he continued, "I mean to say we should not have thought of taking up your valuable time" (here he gave Rose a confidential nudge with his

elbow to indicate that he spoke ironically), "unless we had a legitimate object in doing so."

In answer to this the Autocrat merely inclined his head, and revealed a highly respectable set of teeth; so Frere resumed—

"This young lady, Miss Arundel, has determined, by the advice of Mr. Bracy and—ahem!—myself, to make you the first offer of a very valuable work which she has written—a tale of a very unusual description, peculiarly suited, as I consider, to the present state of society, pointing out certain social evils, and showing how a more consistent adherence to the precepts of Christianity would prove the only effectual remedy."

At these last words Mr. Nonpareil, who, having apparently lapsed into a state of torpor, had listened with a face as immovable as if it had been cast in bronze, suddenly pricked up his ears and condescended to exist again.

"If I understand you, Mr. ——"—"Frere," suggested that gentleman—"Mr. Frere," continued Nonpareil, "if I comprehend your meaning, sir, this lady wishes to dispose of the copyright of a religious novel?"

"That's it," replied Frere.

"Then my answer must mainly depend on the exact height of the principles."

"On the how much?" inquired Frere, considerably mystified.

"On the exact height of the principles, sir," returned Mr. Nonpareil with dignity. "I possess a regular scale, sir, which I have had worked out minutely, proceeding from the broad outlines of Christianity to the most delicate shades of doctrine, and descending even to the smallest points of the canon law. Such an ecclesiological table is most important in our line. Public opinion, sir, fluctuates in such matters, just like the funds, up one week, down the next, up again the next. Now I'll just give you an instance. There was a little work we published, I dare say you've seen it, 'Ambrosius; or, The Curate Confessed.' It was thought rather a heavy book when it first came out. The public would not read it; the trade did not like it; it hung on hand, and I expected to lose from £200 to £300 upon it. Well, sir, the Surplice question began to be agitated. Fortunately, the author had made Ambrosius preach in a white gown. I immediately advertised it freely, the thing took, we sold 3000 copies in a fortnight, and instead of losing £300 I made £600. But that's not all, sir. Shortly after that the Rev. Clerestory Lectern, one of the very tip-top ones, went to Rome, and took his three curates, a serious butler, and the family apothecary with him. This made a great sensation, convulsed the public mind fearfully, and brought on a general attack of the ultra-protestant epidemic. Accordingly, I sent for the author of 'Ambrosius,' offered him terms he was only too glad to jump at, shut him up in the back-shop with half a ream of foolscap and a bottle of sherry, and in little more than a week we printed off 5000 copies of 'Loyoliana; or, The Jesuit in the Chimney Corner.' The book sold like wild-fire, sir. A second edition was called for and went off in no time, and I believe I might have got through a third, only Lord Dunderhead Downhill joined the Plymouth Brethren and married

his kitchen-maid, which brought public opinion up again several degrees and spoiled the sale; but I made a very nice thing of it, altogether."

So saying, Mr. Nonpareil rubbed his hand gleefully, pushed his hair off his forehead, and looked at Rose as if he longed to coin her into money on the spot. After a pause he inquired abruptly, "What's the name, ma'am?"

"The name of my tale?" began Rose, slightly flurried at the conversation so suddenly taking a personal turn. "I thought of calling it 'Helen Tremorne.'"

"Very good, ma'am—very good," returned Mr. Nonpareil approvingly; "euphonious, aristocratic, and vague. Just at this time, a title that does not pledge a book to anything particular of any kind is most desirable. About how long do you suppose it will be?"

"Mr. Frere thought it would make two small volumes about the size of a work called 'Amy Herbert,' I believe," replied Rose.

"Quite right, ma'am, quite right, a very selling size, indeed," was the answer; "clever book, 'Amy Herbert,' very. So much tenderness in it, ma'am; nothing pays better than judicious tenderness; the mothers of England like it to read about—the daughters of England like it—the little girls of England like it—and so the husbands of England are forced to pay for it. If you recollect, ma'am, there's a pathetic governess in 'Amy Herbert,' who calls the children 'dearest'—well imagined character, that. She's sold many a copy has that governess. May I ask does 'Helen Tremorne' call anybody 'dearest'?"

"I really scarcely remember," said Rose, hiding a smile behind her muff.

"It would be most desirable that she should, ma'am," returned Mr. Nonpareil solemnly. "Some vindictive pupil, if possible, ma'am—the more repulsive the child, the greater the self-sacrifice—people like self-sacrifice to read about—they call such incidents touching; and just at the present moment pathos sells immensely. Pray, ma'am, may I ask are you high or low?"

"My principles would not lead me to sympathise with the very ultra party on either side," replied Rose, slightly annoyed at being forced to allude to such subjects in such a presence.

"Ah! the *via media*; yes, I see—very good, nothing could be better. Just at the present time the *via media* is, if I may be allowed the expression, the way that leads to fortune; nothing sells like it—it's so vague and safe, you see; the heads of families buy it in preference to any more questionable teaching. May I ask have you fixed on any sum for which you would dispose of the copyright of your story?"

Rose glanced at Frere, who responded to the appeal by naming a sum exactly double the amount which Rose, in her humility, would gladly have accepted. She was about to say so, but a slight contraction in her companion's brow warned her against committing such an imprudence. Mr. Nonpareil, however, did not appear alarmed at the magnitude of the demand, but promising to peruse

the manuscript carefully (which promise he fulfilled by sending it to his paid reader, never even glancing at it himself) and to give a definite answer in the course of a few days, he bowed them out of his den in the most respectable manner possible. As soon as they had quitted the shop, Rose exclaimed, "Well, if all publishers are like Mr. Nonpareil, the less personal communication I hold with them the better I shall be pleased."

"Ay, but they are not," returned Frere; "many of them are men of great intelligence, simple manners, and who possess much out-of-the-way knowledge, which renders them very agreeable companions. There are pompous and narrow-minded individuals in all professions. Nothing is more illogical than to generalise from a single instance; it's certain to lead to the most absurd results. Why, I've actually encountered an honest lawyer and met with a disinterested patriot before now! But here comes Lewis; I wonder what conclusion he has arrived at in regard to tailors."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW RICHARD FRERE OBTAINED A SPECIMEN OF THE "PODICEPS CORNUTUS."¹

"NOW for the *Podiceps Cornutus!*" exclaimed Frere, after Lewis had been made acquainted with the result of the interview with Mr. Nonpareil.

"May I ask what wonderful creature rejoices in that ineffable name?" inquired Rose.

"You may well say 'wonderful creature,'" returned Frere, enthusiastically. "It's my belief that my precious *Podiceps* is the first specimen which has ever been obtained in this country; and I should fancy it will be the last, too, for I don't expect any one will be inclined to take the same amount of trouble that I took in order to get it. I was down in Lincolnshire last Christmas at a place called Water End—so named, I should imagine, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, because there was no end of water all round it. Well, sir" (he was addressing Rose all this time), "Fenwick, the man with whom I was staying, told me one day that he'd seen a bird when he was duck-shooting which he'd never met with before; and by the description he gave me of it, I felt almost certain it must have been a specimen of the *Podiceps Cornutus*, which, as I dare say you know, is scarcely ever found in this latitude."

"You must excuse my lamentable ignorance," replied Rose, smiling, "but I was not even aware of its illustrious existence five minutes ago."

"Well," returned Frere, arching his eye-brows, "they do neglect women's educations shamefully, I must say! The *Podiceps Cornutus*

¹ The incident in the following chapter is taken from an anecdote related (as the author believes) in "Gilpin's Scenery of the New Forest."

is a species of Grebe by no means rare in Pennsylvania, where they winter; in summer they migrate to the far countries to rear their young; they are web-footed; the bill is—but, however, you shall see my specimen, so I need not bother you with a long description, which I dare say you would not understand, after all; and I'll tell you, instead, my adventures in pursuit of the particular individual in question. The weather was unusually cold, the ground was covered with snow, and the water with ice; but as soon as I heard of the *Podiceps* nothing would serve me but I must go after it. Accordingly, an amphibious old animal of a gamekeeper was summoned to attend me, and as soon as it was light the next morning off we set, and we walked through ice and snow till two o'clock in the afternoon, each armed with a long duck gun that weighed as much as a young cannon. We saw plenty of ducks, teal, and even snipes, but nothing that could by any possibility be mistaken for a *Podiceps*. At last we came to a salt-marsh, as they call it,—that is, a place which is all water when the tide is high, and alluvium—more commonly termed mud—when it's low, which it happened to be at that particular epoch. Well, my old companion began to show signs of knocking up, and gave one or two broad hints that he considered we were engaged in a wild-goose chase in every sense of the term, and that the sooner we relinquished it the better; when, all of a sudden, almost from under our feet, up sprang a bird and flew away like the wind. 'The *Podiceps*, by all that's glorious!' exclaimed I; and levelling my gun in such excitement that I could scarcely hold it steady, I blazed away, and—of course missed it. The old gamekeeper, however, took the thing more coolly—muttering 'most haste worst speed,' he raised his fowling-piece, and when the bird was just at a nice killing distance pulled the trigger—but the confounded gun hung fire and did not go off till my *Podiceps* was all but out of shot. Luckily, however, some of the shots reached him, and just as I fancied I was about to lose sight of him for ever, he gave a sort of lurch, as if he were tipsy, and came toppling down headlong. I marked the spot where he fell, and the moment he reached the ground rushed off to secure him. As I was going along I heard the old fellow bawling something after me, of which I only caught the words, 'take care,' but as I was not in the humour just then to take care of anything except to gain possession of my *Podiceps*, I paid no attention to him. The bird had fallen on a sort of peninsular-shaped bank, and along this, sometimes over my insteps in mud, sometimes up to my knees in water, did I make my way, as fast as the difficulties of the path would permit. The spot where the *Podiceps* had fallen proved to be much farther off than I had imagined it, and before I reached it I was completely out of breath, and almost dragged to pieces by wading through the mud in my heavy boots. However, I cared little for that when I discovered the bird lying on his back as dead as mutton, and on picking it up perceived that it really was an actual *bonâ fide Podiceps Cornutus*, and no mere myth, created by my imagination. Delighted at having secured my prize, I washed the mud off it, smoothed its feathers as carefully as possible, and wrapping it in a handkerchief, placed it in my pocket, and prepared to retrace

my steps. But, lo and behold! while I had been admiring the *Podiceps*, my peninsula had become an island! and there was I, Robinsion Crusoe-like, suddenly cut off from my fellow-creatures. Not a soul, or more correctly, a body could I see,—my old man had disappeared—indeed, so altered was the face of things by the rising of the water that I did not very well know in what quarter to look for him, or in which direction to advance in order to gain *terra firma*, while, to my annoyance, I perceived that my island was rapidly growing ‘small by degrees, and beautifully less!’”

“What a disagreeable position to be placed in!” exclaimed Rose, much interested. “How *did* you contrive to escape?”

“Well, I was just going to tell you if you hadn’t interrupted me,” returned Frere gruffly. “I made one or two attempts to discover the route by which I had come, but in vain; advance which way I would I only got into deeper water, and in the last trial I made I slipped souse into a hole, and was half-drowned before I could contrive to scramble out again. After this rather serious failure I began to feel that I was in an awkward predicament. I shouted, but no one answered, for the very sufficient reason that no one was within hearing. I loaded my gun and tried to discharge it; but it had become wet when I tumbled into the hole, and obstinately refused to go off. The water continued to rise rapidly, and my island was already covered. My only hope now lay in the old man; the words he had bawled after me must evidently have been a warning against the danger in which I had so foolishly involved myself; he was therefore aware of my situation, and would surely take some measures for my rescue. At all events, there was nothing for it but patience. I was unable to swim, the ground on which I stood appeared to be the highest point in the immediate vicinity, so there I must remain. Perhaps, after all, my imagination had exaggerated the danger; the tide might not rise much higher, and the old man, aware of this fact, might be waiting till the waters should recede to join me and pilot me safely home. This at all events was a consolatory hypothesis, and trying to persuade myself it was the true one, I forced the barrel of my gun as deeply into the mud as I was able, leaned my elbows on the butt, and thus supported, watched with a beating heart the advance of the water. My feet were already covered, and it continued to rise almost imperceptibly, and yet, comparing one five minutes with another, with appalling rapidity, higher and higher: it gained the calf of my leg; it approached, then covered my knees; inch by inch it stole on till it reached my hip; the first button of my waistcoat was the next point, then the second, then the third, and as that also disappeared I felt my situation was indeed becoming perilous in the extreme, and cast my eyes around in the vain hope of discovering some means of extricating myself. I might have saved myself the trouble; nothing but the still increasing water was visible on any side. A slight breeze arose and rippled the surface, and now my precaution of thrusting my gun-barrel into the mud stood me in good stead; but for it I should have been swept away by the advancing tide, and even in spite of this support I found some difficulty in preserving my foothold. My eyes seemed

riveted by some supernatural fascination on the progress made by the deepening water. My waistcoat buttoned up to the throat with eight buttons; five of these were by this time immersed, the water stood breast high, the sixth disappeared. It was with the greatest difficulty I could preserve my balance—I swayed from side to side like a drunken man. The cold was intense; my teeth chattered and my limbs were rapidly becoming cramped and paralysed, while to add to my catalogue of miseries, the daylight began to fade apace. I gave myself up for lost, and came to the conclusion that if ever we were fished out the *Podiceps* and I should be alike candidates for a glass-case in some museum. A strange mixture of thoughts ran through my brain. I tried to realise the idea of death. I fancied the separation of soul and body, and speculated on how my mental self would feel when it saw strange fishes taking liberties with my bodily self, without having the slightest power to drive them away. My attention was diverted from these gloomy fancies by observing that the water appeared much longer in reaching my seventh button than it had been in advancing from the fourth to the fifth, or from that to the sixth, and while I was casting about to find a reason for this variation—lo and behold! the sixth button once more became visible. How was this? Had I unconsciously shifted to higher ground, or was it, could it be possible that the tide had turned, that the waters had begun to recede? The agonising suspense of the next five minutes was one of the most severe mental trials I have ever experienced. Though I have spoken lightly on the subject, I had in fact made up my mind to face death as a man and a Christian should do, and was prepared to meet my fate calmly and resolutely; but now the uncertainty, the renewed hope of life struggling with the fear of a possibly approaching death became almost unbearable, and had the conflict been prolonged my presence of mind would have entirely deserted me. Less than five minutes, however, served to set the matter at rest. The sixth button was left high and dry, the fifth reappeared, and was succeeded by another and another; certain landmarks, whose immersion I had watched with anxious eyes, again became visible, and I was thinking of making a final effort to reach *terra firma* before the increasing darkness should throw new difficulties in the way, when my ears were greeted by a distant ‘Halloo.’ I shouted in reply, and soon had the satisfaction of perceiving a flat-bottomed boat making towards me, propelled by my host and the old man who I had conceived basely to have deserted me. As they drew me, half-crippled with cold and exhaustion, into the boat, Fenwick began haranguing me in a composite strain of upbraiding and condolence, but I cut him short by raising my head as I lay sousing in a puddle at the bottom of the punt, and murmuring in a faint voice—‘Never mind, old fellow, it’s all right, for I’ve got the *Podiceps Cornutus*.’ And touching that same bird, here we are at the stuffer’s shop; so come along in, and I’ll show him to you bodily.”

A week had elapsed since the morning on which the above conversation took place, a week in which many events had occurred. The mighty Nonpareil, still considering the *via media* a promising investment, had condescended graciously to purchase Rose’s manu-

script, and when Frere, who brought her the intelligence, placed in her hands a cheque for £100, which, relying on her profound ignorance of business forms, he had kindly substituted for the publisher's bill at six months, she received it with a start of delight. The girl was so happy! she had at length realised her darling project; she had, by her own exertions, helped to lighten Lewis's burden; she had done something towards shortening his period of banishment, for such she considered his enforced residence at Broadhurst. Poor Rose! she had not a particle of avarice in her whole nature, and yet never did miser rejoice over his hoards as she did over that hundred pounds; for it was by no means to be spent—that, fortunately, was unnecessary, as Mrs. Arundel, albeit wanting mental ballast in some points, was a notable housewife, and as for Rachel, she was a very dragon in her care of that Hesperides, the larder; so that out of the liberal allowance Lewis made to them, his mother and sister were privately saving a small fund, destined, as they fondly hoped, to advance at some future time his fortunes; and to this store Rose's hundred pounds would make a magnificent addition. And the joy it was to her thus to dedicate it! Could she have purchased with it the most desirable match in England, the hand of that identical young duke who was exhibited to correct radical tendencies at the electioneering ball at Broadhurst, his Grace might have died a bachelor ere Rose would have diverted the money from its appointed purpose. But something ought to be done with it. Rose had heard of compound interest; nay, she had even had its nature explained to her; and though at the end of the explanation she was more in the dark than at the beginning, she attributed that to her own obtuseness, and contented herself with recollecting that it was something which began by doubling itself, and went on doubling itself, and something else, until—she did not know exactly what; so she supplied the blank by adding, until the desired result should be attained. And now, recalling the definition thus attained, she decided that the advisable thing would be to place her hundred pounds in the most favourable situation for catching that desirable epidemic, compound interest. Accordingly, with much diffidence, and a just appreciation of the very hazy nature of her dissolving views in regard to the investment of capital generally, Rose communicated her ideas to Frere. That gentleman heard her out with a good-humoured smile playing around the corners of his mouth. "Well," he said, as she concluded, "you are but a woman after all, I see!"

"Why, what have you taken me for hitherto, then?" demanded Rose.

This very pertinent inquiry appeared somewhat to puzzle the individual to whom it was addressed, for he pushed his hair back from his forehead and rubbed his chin with an air of perplexity ere he answered, "If I were what they call a lady's man, which means a conceited puppy, I should grin at you to show my white teeth, and reply, 'An Angel;' but seeing that *man* was made a little lower than the angels—though, by the way, that's a mistranslation—and that women are inferior to men, to call a woman an angel is to be guilty of

a logical absurdity, and is only to be excused in the case of lovers, who, as men labouring under a mental delusion—temporary monomaniacs, in fact—are scarcely to be looked upon as rational beings.”

“But if you are not a puppy, and I am not an angel, both which propositions I am perfectly ready to admit, why do you consider it necessary to enunciate your apparent discovery that, after all, I am *only* a woman?” inquired Rose.

“Because, if you must know,” growled Frere, at length fairly brought to bay, “you have hitherto talked so much sense, and so little nonsense, that I’ve looked upon you more as a man than a woman. You wanted the truth, and now you’ve got it,” he continued in a tone like the rumbling of distant thunder, as Rose, clapping her hands in girl-like delight at having elicited this confession, replied with a low, silvery laugh, “I thought so! I fancied that was it! Oh, the conceit of these lords of the creation! And now that you have found out that I am not the mental Amazon your fancy painted me, do you intend *quite* to give me up?”

As she said this, half playfully, half in earnest, raising her calm, grey eyes, which now sparkled with unwonted animation, to his face, Frere experienced a (to him) entirely new sensation. He was for the first time conscious of the effect produced by

“The light that lies
In woman’s eyes,”

and he felt—unreasonable as he could not but consider it—that he was better pleased with Rose as she was than if she had been Professor Faraday himself; than whom (barring Sir Isaac Newton) Frere’s mind was incapable of conceiving a more exalted type of male humanity. The way in which he expressed the gentle sentiment which had stolen into his breast was as follows:—

“Don’t talk such rubbish, but listen to a little common sense, and try and comprehend it, if you can, for once in your life. You want this money invested for Lewis’s benefit, don’t you?” Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he continued, “Well, then, have you sufficient confidence in me to trust it entirely in my hands to invest as I think best?”

“I should be indeed ungrateful if I had not,” returned Rose, the tears springing to her eyes, as she remembered Frere’s many acts of kindness to her father.

“Psha! stuff! I didn’t mean anything of that kind,” rejoined Frere, provoked with himself for having recalled such distressing recollections, “only you women are so ready to trust anybody till you’ve been let in for it two or three times, and then you’re just as unreasonable the other way, and suspect every one whether they deserve it or not; however, as I believe I’m indifferent honest, I’ll take this money, if you wish it, and do the best I can with it. Lewis shall not be always a tutor if we can help it, though it’s wonderful how contented he’s grown lately—so as he lashed out too when he was first put in harness.”

"You've observed the change, have you, Mr. Frere?" returned Rose interrogatively. "I have been rejoicing in it exceedingly; it is just what I could have wished, but dared not hope for. I attribute it in great measure to his affection for poor Walter."

"Well, it may be so; no doubt the lad presents an interesting psychological study," returned Frere reflectively, "though I rather conceive it may be owing to his having taken a liking to——"

"Miss Grant and Miss Livingstone," vociferated the Colossus of plush, flinging open the door with a startling vehemence, the result of an ebullition of temper consequent upon a severe rebuke he had just received from Minerva for mispronouncing her patronymic, which interruption prevented Frere from expressing his innocent conviction that certain geological researches in the neighbourhood of Broadhurst constituted the charm that had so suddenly reconciled Lewis to his dependent position.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RECOUNTS "YE PLEASAUNTE PASTYMES AND CUNNYNGE
DEVYCES" OF ONE THOMAS BRACY.

ANNIE GRANT introduced herself to Rose with that easy courtesy which adds so great a charm to the manners of a perfectly well-bred woman, and Rose, as she gazed on her, thought she had never beheld anything so lovely before. She was dressed in—*Halt là!* attention, young ladies! *favete*—no, *not linguis*; in the amiability of your natures you are always ready enough to do that—*favete auribus*, listen and learn; for I myself, the chronicler of this veritable history, am about to vindicate the good use I made of those halcyon days when

"My only books
Were woman's looks,"

and to prove that "follies" were not *all* they taught me—for this I assert and am prepared to maintain, that good taste in dress is not in itself a folly, and only becomes so when the mind of a fool (or fool-*ess* as the case may be) exalts it to an undue pre-eminence. Annie, be it remembered, was a *blonde*, with just enough of the rose in her cheeks to prevent the lily from producing an appearance of ill health. The month was June, the London season was at its height, and the young lady had called upon Rose in her way to the second horticultural fête at Chiswick Gardens. Her bonnet was of white chip, from which a small white ostrich feather tipped with blue drooped lovingly, as though it sought to kiss the fair face beneath it. A *visite* of light blue *glacé* silk had been fashioned by the skill of an ingenious Parisian *modiste*, so as to suggest rather than conceal the exquisite form it covered, beneath which the rich folds of a gown of pale fawn-colour *Gros de Naples*, as uncreased as if, cherub-like, its wearer never sat down, completed the

costume; and a very becoming one it was, as we feel sure all young ladies of good taste will allow. Richard Frere, being slightly acquainted with Minerva Livingstone, good-naturedly devoted himself to that indurated specimen of the original granite formation, who from her name and nature might possibly possess a geological interest in his eyes, and by trying to macadamise her into small-talk, enabled the two girls to prosecute their acquaintance undisturbed. Rose, little used to society, was shy and reserved before strangers, though there was a quiet self-possession about her which prevented her manner from appearing *gauche* or unformed. Annie, on the other hand, being in the constant habit of receiving and entertaining guests, made conversation with a graceful ease which completely fascinated her companion. The only subject on which her fluency appeared to desert her was when she spoke of Lewis, his kindness to Walter, and the valuable services he had lately rendered her father; but the little she did say showed so much good taste and evinced such genuine warmth of heart and delicacy of feeling, that his sister was more than satisfied, and settled in her own mind that if all the family were as charming in their different ways as was Miss Grant in hers, Lewis's contentment with his present situation was no longer to be wondered at.

"What a lovely, fascinating creature!" exclaimed Rose enthusiastically, as the door closed on her visitors; "she is like some bright vision of a poet's dream."

"She seems a cute, hard-headed old lady, but she struck me as having rather too much vinegar in her composition to induce one to covet much of her society; olives are well enough in their way, but a man would not exactly wish to dine upon them, either," returned Frere.

"Who on earth are you talking about?" inquired Rose in astonishment.

"Why, who should I be talking about, except Miss Livingstone?" returned Frere gruffly. "Have you 'gone stupid' all of a sudden?"

"You must have become blind," retorted Rose, "not to have observed Miss Grant's unusual grace and beauty; I wonder Lewis has never said more about her."

"Bah!" growled Frere, "do you think your brother has nothing better to do than to chatter about a woman's pretty face? Lewis is, or was (for his opinions on the subject seem to have been modified lately), a confirmed misogynist, and I'm very glad of it. Nothing makes me more savage than to hear the confounded puppies of the present day talk about this 'doosed fine woman' or that 'uncommon nice gal.' If I happened to have a sister or any other womankind belonging to me, and they were to make free with her name in that fashion, I should pretty soon astonish some of their exquisite delicacies. Well," he continued, buttoning up his coat all awry, "I'm off, so good-bye;" and taking Rose's hand in his own, he wrung it with such force that a flush of pain overspread her pale features. Observing this, he exclaimed, "Did I squeeze your fingers too hard? Well, I am a bear, as Lewis says, that's certain." As he spoke he laid her hand in

his own broad palm, and stroking it gently, as though trying to soothe an injured child, he continued, "Poor little thing, I didn't mean to hurt it;" then looking innocently surprised as Rose somewhat hastily withdrew it, he added, "What! isn't that right either? well, I see I'd better be off. I'll look you up again in a day or two, and if you want me you know where to find me." So saying, he clattered downstairs, put on his hat hind-side before, and strode off, walking at the rate of at least five miles an hour. As he passed the church in Langham Place he overtook two gentlemen engaged in earnest conversation: regardless of this he quickened his pace and struck the younger of the two a smart blow on the back, exclaiming, "Bracy, my boy, how are you?"

The individual thus roughly saluted immediately reeled forward as if from the effects of the blow, and encountering in his headlong career an elderly female, whose dress bespoke her an upper servant or thereabouts, he seized her by the elbows and twirled her round in the bewildering maze of an impromptu and turbulent waltz, which he continued till an opportune lamp-post interposed and checked his Terpsichorean performance. Before his astonished partner had recovered breath and presence of mind sufficient to pour forth the first words of a tide of angry remonstrance, Bracy interposed by exclaiming in a tone of the most bland civility—

"My dear madam, excuse this apparent liberty; really I am so completely overpowered that I would sink into the ground at your feet if it were not for the granite pavement which is——"

Here the good woman, having scarcely recovered breath, gasped vehemently, "It's very hard, so it is——"

"Which is," continued Bracy, louder and with still deeper *empressement*, "as you justly observe, so very hard; but, my dear madam, the facts of this case are yet harder. Let me assure you my offence, if you choose to stigmatise my late lamented indiscretion by so harsh a name, was perfectly involuntary; simply an effect produced by a too vehement demonstration of fraternal feeling on the part of my particular friend Mr. Frere. Allow me to introduce you—Outraged Elderly Lady, Mr. Frere—Mr. Frere, Outraged Elderly Lady. Ah, what a happy meeting! As the ever-appropriated Swan observes, 'Fair encounter of two most rare affections!' or again, 'Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love accompany your hearts.'"

"Yes, it's all wery fine," exclaimed the outraged one (suddenly finding her tongue), "to go frightening of respectable parties out of their wits, and then think to smooth 'em over with your blarneying words; but if I could set eyes on one of them lazy pelisemen which is never to be found when wanted, blessed if I wouldn't give you in charge for your impudence, so I would."

During the delivery of this speech Bracy had listened in an exaggerated theatrical attitude of entranced attention, and at its conclusion he exclaimed, in a voice so intensely impassioned that it would have ensured his success at any of the minor theatres—

"Oh! speak again; let mine enraptured ear
Drink the sweet accents of thy silvery voice."

Which sentiment procured for him the applause of a small male spectator of the tender age of ten years, clad in much dirt and a pair of adult trousers on their last legs in every sense of the term, who expressed his approval by nodding complacently and remarking, "Wery well done; ancore, I says."

"Come along," exclaimed Frere, seizing Bracy's arm and almost forcing him away; "you'll have a crowd round you directly. Your companion has taken himself off long ago."

"So he has," returned Bracy, looking round. "Now I call that mean, to desert a friend in difficulties; more especially," he added, as they walked away together, "as the said difficulties were undertaken wholly and solely on his account."

"On his account?" returned Frere in surprise; "why, I should have thought the mighty De Grandeville was the last person likely to appreciate a street row."

"For which reason I never lose an opportunity of involving him in one," replied Bracy, rubbing his hands with mischievous glee. "He can't bear walking with me, for I always get him into some scrape or other, and injure his dignity irreparably for the time being. Why, the last severe frost we had I met him in Pall Mall, drew him on to talk of architecture, pointed out to him a mistake which didn't exist in the front of one of the club-houses, and while he was looking up at it beguiled him on to a slide and upset him, quite inadvertently, into an itinerant orange basket, just as Lady B—, with whom he has a bowing acquaintance, was passing in her carriage. Look at him now, prancing along as if all Regent Street belonged to him! Walk a little faster, and we shall overtake him; and, by the way, lend me that wonderful cotton umbrella of yours; I'll make him carry it right down to the Home Office. You are bound for Westminster, are you not?"

"What made you guess that?" asked Frere, handing him the umbrella.

"Because there's a meeting at the Palæontological to-day at three, and I know you're one of their great guns," was the reply.

"It's my belief that you know everything about everybody," returned Frere, laughing.

"And you know everything about every-thing," rejoined Bracy, "so between us we form an epitome of human knowledge. I say, De Grandeville," he continued, as they overtook that gentleman, "you are a treacherous ally, to desert your comrade in the moment of danger. That ferocious old woman abused me within an inch of my life, and wanted to give me in charge to a policeman."

"Knowing you have an equal aptitude for getting into and out of scrapes of that nature," returned De Grandeville, "I—ar—considered you fully equal to the situation—and—ar—having no taste for bandying slang with vituperative plebeian females, I left you to fight your own battles. Was I not justified in doing so, Mr. Frere?"

"Well, Bracy being the aggressor, I suppose you were," was the answer; "but as I was the innocent first cause of the scrimmage I felt bound to remain, and dragged Bracy away by main force, just in time, as I imagine, to save him from the nails of the insulted matron."



BRACY DANCETH A LIVELY MEASURE.

"By Jove! what a nuisance. I do believe I've broken my trouser strap," exclaimed Bracy, stopping and elevating his boot on a doorstep. "Hold this one moment while I try to repair damages, there's a good fellow," he continued, thrusting the umbrella into De Grandeville's unwilling hand; "I'll be with you again directly."

The damages must have been serious, judging by the length of time they took to remedy; for ere Bracy rejoined them, Frere and De Grandeville had proceeded half the length of Regent Street, the latter carrying the umbrella—which he regarded from time to time with looks of the most intense disgust—so as to keep it as much out of sight as possible, even secreting it behind him whenever he perceived a fashionably dressed man or woman approaching.

"I was trying to recollect that very interesting anecdote you told me of the attack on the barrack in Galway when you were staying with the 73rd—Frere has never heard of it," observed Bracy as he rejoined his companions.

Now this said anecdote related to an episode in De Grandeville's career to which he delighted to refer, and which, accordingly, most of those who boasted the honour of his acquaintance had heard more than once. Such indeed was the case with Frere, and he was just going to say so when he caught a warning look from Bracy, which induced him to remain silent.

"Ar—really, it was a very simple thing," began De Grandeville, falling into the trap most unsuspectingly. "I happened to know several of the 73rd fellows who were quartered down in Galway at a place called—ar—here's your umbrella."

"I beg your pardon! I did not quite catch the name," returned Bracy, who, having buried his fingers in the pockets of his paletot, did not seem to have such a thing as a hand about him.

"At a place called Druminabog," continued De Grandeville. "The country was in a very disturbed state; one or two attacks of a rather serious character had been made upon the police, and the military had been called out to support them; ar—here's your um——"

"Was it three or four years ago that all this took place?" inquired the still handless Bracy.

"Four years on the second of last April," returned De Grandeville.

"Are you sure it wasn't the first?" muttered Frere aside.

"I was travelling on a business tour in the sister island," continued the narrator, "and meeting Osborne, a 73rd man, who was going down to join his regiment, he persuaded me to come on with him to Druminabog—ar—here's your——"

"Was that Tom Osborne, who sold out when the rifles were going to Ceylon?" interposed Bracy, studiously ignoring the proffered umbrella.

The victimised De Grandeville replied in the affirmative, and resuming his tale, soon grew so deeply interested in the recital of his own heroic exploits that the umbrella ceased any longer to afflict him; nay, so absorbed did he become, that in a moment of excitement, just as he was passing the Horse Guards, he waved that article in the air and led on an imaginary company of the 73rd therewith,

after the fashion of gallant commanders in panoramas of Waterloo, and battle scenes enacted at the amphitheatre of Astley. As they approached the Home Office, and De Grandeville had arrived at the concluding sentence of his narrative, which ran as follows:—"And so, sir, the Major shook me warmly by the hand, exclaiming, 'De Grandeville, you're worthy to be one of us, and I only wish you were, my boy!'" the trio paused, and Bracy extracting one hand from the pocket in which it had been reposing, remarked, with the air of a man who considered himself slightly aggrieved but meant to make the best of it—

"Now, if you please, I'll trouble you for my umbrella; I did not like to interrupt your story by asking for it sooner, but now, if you have no objection, I shall be glad of it."

"Certainly," replied De Grandeville, only too glad (his attention being once more attracted to it) to get rid of his incubus.

As Frere turned aside to hide a laugh, Bracy inquired, "By the way, De Grandeville, do you dine at Lady Lombard's next Tuesday?"

"I do," replied Frere; "and I suppose it's to be one of her Lord Mayor's feasts, as I hear she's beating up recruits in all quarters."

"Ar—really—I've received an invitation—but I—ar—'pon my word, I don't know whether one's justified in going to such places; one must draw the line—ar—somewhere."

"It will be a first-rate feed," resumed Bracy. "Lady Lombard's *chef* is a capital hand, and her wine is by no means to be despised."

"Yes, but the woman herself," rejoined De Grandeville in a tone of the deepest disgust, "just retrace her degrading career—ar—not an ancestor to begin the world with."

"Well, I should have supposed she possessed her fair share in Adam and Noah, too," remarked Frere drily.

"Plebeian in origin," continued De Grandeville, not heeding the interruption, "she sinks herself still lower by espousing first a pickle-merchant, secondly a pawnbroker; the first—ar—repulsive, the second sordid."

"She did not play her cards altogether badly, though," observed Bracy. "Old Girkin died worth a plum, and Sir Pinchbeck Lombard was a millionaire, or thereabouts."

"Money, sir," returned De Grandeville sententiously, "is by no means to be despised, and those who affect indifference on the subject usually do so to screen a grasping and avaricious temperament. But money becomes really respectable only when it enables those who are connected with the old historical families of England, those in whose veins runs the 'blue' blood of aristocracy, to assert their rightful position as lords of the soil. Among the landed gentry of England are to be found——"

"Some thoroughly jolly fellows," interposed Bracy, "especially to show you the way across country, or help to kick up a shindy at the Coal Hole. But we must part company here; Frere's booked for the Palæontological, and I am going to attend a Committee at the House. You'll be at Lady Lombard's?"

"I shall give the matter full consideration," returned De Grandeville. "It is—ar—by no means a step to decide on hastily. In these levelling days men of—ar—position are forced to be particular as to the places to which they afford the—ar—sanction of their presence. I wish you a very good morning;" so saying, he raised his hat slightly to Frere, drew himself up with his broad chest well thrown forward, and marched off majestically like a concentrated squadron of heavy dragoons.

"Here's your umbrella, Frere," remarked Bracy, handing it to him as he spoke; "many thanks for the loan. I don't wonder you are careful of it; it's a most inestimable property, and has afforded me half-an-hour's deep and tranquil enjoyment. But of all the pompous fools that ever walked this earth Grandeville is *facile princeps*."

"He's no fool either," returned Frere.

"Then why does he behave as *sich*?" demanded Bracy. "His conceit and egotism are inconceivable. He's a regular modern Cyclops; he has one great 'I' in the middle of his forehead, through the medium of which he looks at everything. One really feels an obligation to poke fun at that man. Well, I can't accuse myself of neglect of duty in that particular, that's a consolatory reflection; but he's enough to convert the slowest old anchorite that ever chewed peas into a practical joker."

"He was severe on the excellent Lady Lombard," observed his companion.

"Did you not notice his remark about riches being respectable only when in the possession of '—ar—those connected with the old historical families of England'? That gave me a new idea."

"A thing always worth having, if but from its rarity," replied Frere. "What was it?"

"Why, it occurred to me what fun it would be to marry him to Lady Lombard—more particularly after his abuse of her to-day."

"A project more easy to conceive than to execute," returned Frere, laughing.

"I don't know that," answered Bracy confidently; "if I once set my mind on a thing, I generally contrive to accomplish it. It did not at first sight appear likely that De Grandeville would carry your old cotton umbrella through some of the most fashionable streets in London at three o'clock in the afternoon, yet you see he did it."

"You're a remarkable man, my dear Bracy, and I have the greatest faith in your powers of management, but if you can induce Marmaduke de Grandeville to marry the widow of the pawnbroker and the pickle-man, you must be the very—well, never mind who—here we are at the Palæontological."

So saying, Frere shook hands with Bracy, and the oddly consorted companions, between whom their very eccentricities appeared to constitute a bond of sympathy, each went his way, the practical joker to apply his acute intellect to the details of that mighty machine, the executive government of England, and the *savant* to investigate the recently discovered small rib (it was only eight feet long) of a peculiar species of something-osaurus, the original proprietor of the rib being

popularly supposed to have "lived and loved," cut its awful teeth, and been gathered to its amphibious fossil forefathers two thousand years and some odd months before the creation of man.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEREIN IS FAITHFULLY DEPICTED THE CONSTANCY OF THE TURTLE-DOVE.

IT was the important Thursday on which Lady Lombard's chief dinner-party of the season was to take place, and the mighty coming event cast a proportionate shadow before. For a day or two previous a gloom, as of an approaching tempest, hung over the devoted mansion. Visitors were scarce; the invited would not call because they *were* invited, and the non-invited avoided the place as though it were plague-stricken, lest it should be supposed they wished to be invited, which for the most part they did. As the event drew nearer signs appeared heralding its approach: shoals of fishmongers, laden with the treasures of the deep, poured down the area steps; the number of oysters which entered that house would have surprised Neptune himself; squadrons of poulterers' men brought flocks of feathered fowls, and of fowls unfeathered; there was not a single species of edible ornithology of which Lady Lombard did not possess one or more specimens—she would have ordered a *Podiceps Cornutus* had she ever heard of such a creature. The eighty-guinea advertisement-horse, with the plated harness, in Messrs. Fortnum & Mason's spring cart, began to think his masters must have established a depôt in the far west, and that he was engaged in transporting thither the major portion of their seductive stock. In the interior of that dwelling-house confusion reigned supreme. Upstairs Mrs. Perquisite, the house-keeper, rendered life a burden to the female servants, and tyrannised over her hapless mistress till free will became a mockery mentioned in connection with that ever-thwarted widow. It was enough for Lady Lombard to express a wish; Mrs. Perquisite, a living embodiment of the antagonistic principle, was instantly in arms to oppose it.

"What, your ladyship!" would she exclaim (and be it observed, her voice was at least an octave higher than any good-tempered woman's ever was, and pitched in a most aggravating key); "what! not uncover the marble table! I never heard of such a thing! Her Ladyship *will* have it taken off, Jane—not uncover that bootiful Paria marble! inlaid with Lappuss Lazily. Why, your Ladyship must be a-dreaming!"

"I thought that the satin cover matching the chairs, and having poor dear Sir Pinchbeck's arms embroidered on it, perhaps it might have been better to leave it on, Mrs. Perquisite," pleaded Lady Lombard meekly.

"Of course your Ladyship can do as your Ladyship pleases; if your

Ladyship likes to demean yourself by looking after such things, which was never the case when I lived with the Dowager Marchioness of Doubledutch, now no more, having remembered all her faithful servants handsomely on her death-bed, without a dry eye about her, in the seventy-sixth year of her age. Perhaps I had better go downstairs, which is only in the way, and your Ladyship can direct Jane to set out the rooms according to your Ladyship's fancy."

Poor Lady Lombard, when once that defunct Dowager Marchioness was let loose upon her, felt that her fate was sealed. It was not for her, the widow of a man who had been knighted, to fly in the face of the peerage; so she humbly authorised the removal of the Lombard arms, implored Perquisite to arrange the rooms as she had been accustomed to set out those of the poor dear Marchioness, and betook herself to the sanctity of her own boudoir, leaving the field to the virago, to whom she paid £60 per annum for keeping her in a continual state of moral bondage.

But while such scenes as the foregoing were enacting in the upper portions of the establishment, the French *chef de cuisine*, Monsieur Hector Achille Ulisse Abelard d'Haricots, was making a perfect Pandemonium of the lower regions. The physical energy displayed by that accomplished foreigner was truly admirable, his ubiquity was marvellous; the tassel at the top of his white night-cap appeared to have been multiplied infinitesimally and to pervade space, the sound of his polyglot exhortations and reflections re-echoed through the lofty servants' offices. Wonderful were the strange oaths he poured forth, when Antoine, a long, limp, shambling French lad, "*son élève*, zie son of—*hélas! baigné des larmes*, he even till at present scarcely could pronounce her name—his angelic sister, since some time entombed, having espoused *un brave Anglais*, his long-lost Louise Amélie Marie-Antoinette de Brownsmit, née d'Haricots,"—when this unworthy offspring of international alliance committed some unpardonable artistic error, and unlike "Polly" of lyrical celebrity, did *not* "put the kettle on," or "take it off again," exactly at the critical moment. Deep and nasal were his ejaculations when some obtuse butcher's boy would not understand his "Anglishe," which that somewhat apocryphal personage, "*ce brave garçon Brownsmit*" (who was Hector Achille's Mrs. Harris, and was consequently brought forward on all occasions), had declared he spoke like a native.

"*Mais, que diable! vot is zies?*" he would exclaim, raising his eye-glass to examine with a face of deep disgust a shin of beef; "*vot is zies?* Did I not ordaire *un gigot*, vot you call a leg of ship, and 'ere you 'ave transported to me—*ah, que c'est dégoutant!*—zie stump of a cow: *qu'ils sont bêtes, ces Anglais*—takes 'im away."

But if there were earthquakes and tornadoes in the culinary and decorative departments, difficulties hydra-headed had arisen in the boudoir of Lady Lombard, where sat a council of three, Rose merely acting as secretary and writing just what she was bidden. The third privy councillor (besides the giver of the feast and Mrs. Arundel) was a certain Mrs. Colonel Brahmin, relict of the late Colonel Brahmin, which gallant officer had been cut off in the prime of life, together

with 200 tawny privates of the —th native infantry, by falling into an ambush of armed Sikhs, headed by Meer Ikan Chopimatoos at Choakumcurree. After this afflicting event Mrs. Colonel Brahmin returned to England, in the thirty-third year of her age, with a small pension, a very becoming widow's cap, and an earnest desire to replace the victim of Ikan Chopimatoos's scimitar without loss of time.

Now, in bygone hours the lamented Sir Pinchbeck Lombard, in his capacity of East India director, had known and patronised the lamented Brahmin; what, therefore, could be more natural than that their disconsolate widows should desire to mingle their tears? And, indeed, Mrs. Colonel Brahmin was so anxious to ensure the effectual working of this Mutual-misery-mingling Association, that on her return to England she was good enough to stay six months with Lady Lombard; and although, during the whole of that period, she told every one she was anxiously looking out for a house, so few edifices are there in London and its vicinity, that she was unable to find one till the very week before her hostess was about to start on a self-defensive tour to the Lakes. Since then she had been vizier-in-chief to her wealthy sister in affliction, riding in her carriage, eating her dinners, and entertaining her guests, especially such eligible males as appeared likely to succeed to the (nominal) command left vacant by the cut-off colonel; but up to the present time these young eligibles had remained unattached, and the appointment was still to be filled up. Mrs. Brahmin was not really pretty, though, by dint of a pair of fine eyes, glossy hair, a telling smile, and little white hands, she contrived to pass as such. In her manner she affected the youthful and innocent; and very well she did it, considering her natural astuteness, and the amount of experience and *savoir vivre* she had acquired when following the world-wide fortunes of the cut-off one. Lady Lombard believed in her to a great extent, and liked her better than she deserved. Perquisite saw at a glance, not only through, but considerably *beyond* her, and hated her with all the rancour of a vulgar mind. But Mrs. Brahmin was too strong for Perquisite, and with her soft voice and imperturbable simplicity put her down more thoroughly than the veriest virago could have done—the housekeeper's most bitter speeches and cutting innuendos producing much the same effect on the mild Susanna that a blow might have done upon an air-cushion—viz., exhausting the aggressor's strength without making the slightest impression on her opponent.

Mrs. Brahmin had been prepared to find in Mrs. Arundel a dangerous rival, and was ready to defend her position to the death, and to battle *à l'outrance* for her portion of the Lombard loaves and fishes. But her courage was not destined to be put to the proof, the present being an occasion on which an appeal to arms was unnecessary—diplomacy would suit her purpose better, and on diplomacy, therefore, she fell back. She had not been ten minutes in Mrs. Arundel's company ere she discovered her weak point—she was unmistakably vain. Accordingly, with artless simplicity, Mrs. Brahmin indirectly praised everything Mrs. Arundel said or did, and Mrs. Arundel straightway suffered her discrimination to be tickled to sleep, took Mrs. Brahmin

at her own price, and doted on her from that time forth, until—but we will leave events to develop themselves in their due course.

Rose and Mrs. Brahmin were mutual enigmas—neither could comprehend the other. Rose had heard the details of the “Chopimatoo” affair, and all her sympathies were ready to be enlisted in behalf of the interesting widow; but the “sweet simplicity,” cleverly as it was done, did not deceive her. With the instinct of a true nature she felt that it was assumed, and that beneath it lay the real character. What that might be remained to be discovered, and she suspended her judgment till opportunity might afford her a glimpse of that which was so studiously concealed. On the other hand, the character of Rose was one which Mrs. Brahmin could by no means comprehend, perhaps because in its entirety it was beyond and above her comprehension; but parts of it she discerned clearly enough, and most particularly did they puzzle her. For instance, she perceived that Rose had a mind, properly so called—that her ideas and opinions were *bonâ fide* the product of her own intellect, and not like those of too many girls, a dim reflex of somebody else’s; but the straightforward, earnest truthfulness of her nature she could by no means fathom, such a quality being essentially foreign to her own disposition; accordingly, she deemed it put on for a purpose, which purpose it behoved her to find out. But her investigations did not prosper well, from the simple fact that *ex nihilo nil fit*: Rose, having nothing to conceal, concealed it effectually.

Many and important were the consultations held in the boudoir by this council of three, as to who should, and who should not, be invited. Lady Lombard’s smooth brow grew furrowed with the unwonted demand upon her powers (?) of mind.

“Sir Benjamin and Lady Boucher regret exceedingly that a previous engagement prevents their accepting Lady Lombard’s kind invitation for Thursday, the —th.”

“Dear me, how *dreadfully* provoking!” sighed the perplexed “invitress.” “My dear Susanna” (the Brahmin’s Christian name), “the Bouchers are engaged, and there’ll be nobody fit to meet the General Gudgeons. What are we to do?”

“Would you ask the Dackerels? They’re such very nice people, and live in such very good style, dear Lady Lombard,” *cooed* Mrs. Brahmin (for, be it observed, that bereaved one’s method of speaking, together with the low, gentle, sleepy, caressing tones of her soft voice, involuntarily reminded her hearers of the cooing of a dove or the purring of a cat).

“They’re only lieutenant-colonels, are they, my love?” inquired Lady Lombard doubtfully.

“Oh! my dear Lady Lombard, surely you must recollect he has been a full colonel, by purchase, these five years, *vice* Rawbone Featherbed, who sold out and married an heiress—at least,” murmured Innocence, remembering herself, or rather her *part*, “she was said to be very rich; but of course it must have been a love-match. 1

cannot believe people are so—so horrid as to marry from any other motive."

"Well, then, we'd better ask the Dackerels. Miss Arundel, my love, will you request the pleasure of Colonel and Mrs. Dackerel's company—with one R, my dear—at seven o'clock. That shy son with the long legs, I suppose we need not ask him, my dear?"

"He's lately come into a large Yorkshire property from an uncle on the mother's side and has taken the surname of Dace, and perhaps, as he's so shy, he might feel hurt at not being asked. I feel such sympathy with shyness, you know; besides, somebody said he was an author," rejoined Susanna, dropping her eyelids and looking as unconscious and disinterested as if John Dace Dackerel Dace, Esq., barrister-at-law, still depended upon that ghost of nothing, his professional income, instead of the rent-roll of the manor of Roachpool, in the West Riding.

"If they come they'll make—let me see," mused Lady Lombard; "what did I say the Fitzsimmons's were? Yes, twelve; well, then, they'll make fifteen, and the table only holds three more, and that tiresome Mr. De Grandeville hasn't sent an answer yet, and I shall be so disappointed if he does not come, for he knows everybody and moves in such high society, and is such a tall, noble, military-looking creature."

This eulogium recalling, probably by contrast (seeing that the lamented Brahmin had been remarkably small of his age all through his boyhood, and never outgrown it afterwards), sad recollections of the fair Susanna's killed and wounded, produced a little embroidered handkerchief which just held the two tears its owner felt called upon to shed on such occasions. The memory of the victim had, however, been so often before embalmed by pearly drops in her presence that Lady Lombard had grown rather callous on the subject, and she abruptly invaded the sanctity of grief by exclaiming—

"It lies between the Lombard Browns and the Horace Hicciry's, my dear. The Hicciry's live in better style, I know: Mrs. Hicciry was to have been presented at Court last year, only little Curatius chose to be born instead—the most lovely child! But the Lombard Browns are godsons, at least *he* is, of poor dear Sir Pinchbeck's, and they've not dined here this season."

"I think, dear Lady Lombard, if I might venture to advise, the Horace Hicciry's would do best. Mrs. General Gudgeon would get on so well with Mrs. Hicciry, I'm sure; and I'm afraid Mrs. Dackerel, —you know she's very clever, writes poetry, those sweet things in the Bijou—all clever people are sarcastic, you know,—I'm afraid Mrs. Dackerel might laugh at poor dear Mr. Lombard Brown's little eccentricity about his H's."

"Ah, yes, that's true," returned Lady Lombard; "yes, I forgot his H's."

"As he probably does himself," whispered Mrs. Arundel aside to Rose.

"Then, my dear Miss Arundel, may I trouble you to write a note to the Horace Hicciry's—with two I's, my love—15 Bellairs Terrace,

Park Village West. What a pretty hand you write, and so quick! Then if Mr. De Grandeville will only come, the table will be filled properly."

"And a dear, charming party it will be," cooed the bereaved one, who had manoeuvred herself into an invitation at an early stage of the proceedings.

"Yes, my love, I hope it will," replied the giver of the feast anxiously. "And if I was quite sure that Perquisite and Haricot would not quarrel, and that General Gudgeon would not take too much port wine after dinner, and tell his gentlemen's stories to the ladies up in the drawing-room, more particularly since I hear Miss MacSalvo has taken an extra serious turn lately, I should feel quite happy about it all."

"You'd better add a postscript to the great Gudgeon's note mentioning the port wine and its alarming consequences, Rose," whispered the incorrigible Mrs. Arundel. Her daughter smiled reprovingly, and the sitting concluded.

Exactly at the time when Lady Lombard had completely given him up, and was revolving in her anxious mind how she might best supply his loss, De Grandeville condescended graciously to vouchsafe a favourable answer.

On the afternoon of the eventful day, as Frere was returning from his place of business, he met—of course accidentally—Tom Bracy, who immediately took possession of his vacant arm and engaged him in a disquisition on the use of formic acid as an anæsthetic agent, which discussion proved so deeply interesting to his companion, that in less than five minutes he was completely lost to all outward objects and reduced (for all practical purposes) to the intellectual level of a docile child of three years old.

"Well," continued Frere eagerly, as Bracy paused before a hair-dresser's shop, "well, supposing, for the sake of argument, I consent to waive my objection; supposing I allow that by the process you describe you've produced your acid——"

"Excuse my interrupting you one moment, but I was going in here to have my hair cut. If you're not in a particular hurry, perhaps you'll come in with me, and I think I can show you where you are wrong."

"Yes—no, I'm not in a hurry; come along, I'm convinced there's a mistake in your theory which upsets your whole argument—merely subject to the common analysing process——"

"By the way," observed Bracy carelessly, "you'd be all the better for a little judicious trimming yourself; besides, it's more sociable. This gentleman and I each want our hair cut. Sit down, Frere."

"Eh? nonsense; I never have my hair cut except when the hot weather sets in," remonstrated that individual; but he was fairly in the toils. Bracy set a garrulous hairdresser's man at him, who deprived him of his hat, popped him down in the appointed chair, and enveloped him in a blue-striped wrapper before he very well knew where he was, or had arrived at any kind of decision whatsoever on the subject. No sooner was he seated than Bracy administered a fresh dose of his anæsthetic agent; Frere resumed his argument, and long ere he had

exhausted the catalogue of chemical tests to which his opponent's theory (invented for the occasion) might be subjected, the hair-cutter (previously instructed) had reduced his hair and whiskers to the latitude and longitude usually assigned to such capillary attractions by the "manners and customs of ye English in ye nineteenth century." And thus Frere became, for the time being, a reasonable looking mortal, and Bracy won a new hat, which he had betted that morning with a mutual acquaintance, on the apparently rash speculation that he would before the day was over administer an anæsthetic agent to Richard Frere, under the influence of which he should have his hair cut.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DESCRIBES THE HUMOURS OF A LONDON DINNER-PARTY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

DEAR Rose Arundel (excuse us the adjective, kind reader, for we frankly own to being very fond of her), having been a perfect godsend to everybody during the whole morning of the party day, having thought of everything and done everything, and looked on the bright side of everything, and sacrificed herself so pleasantly that an uninitiated beholder might have imagined her intensely selfish and doing it all for her own personal gratification,—Rose having, amongst other gymnastics of self-devotion, run up and down stairs forty-three times in pursuit of waifs and strays from Lady Lombard's memory, committed the first bit of selfishness of which she had been guilty all day, by sitting down to rest for five minutes before she began her toilet; and leaning her forehead on her hand, thought over her own chances of pleasure or amusement during the evening. She had had one disappointment: Lewis had been invited, and Lewis would not come. He did not say he could not come, but he put on what Mrs. Arundel called his "iron-face," and said shortly, "the thing was impossible;" and no one could have looked on his compressed lips and doubted the truth of the assertion. It grieved Rose, for she read his soul as it were an open book before her, and she saw there pride, that curse of noble minds, still unsubdued. Lady Lombard patronised them, and Lewis could not submit to witness it. Rose had hoped better things than this; she had not failed to observe the change that had taken place in her brother during his residence at Broadhurst; she saw that from an ardent, impetuous boy he had become an earnest-minded, high-souled man, and in the calm dignity of his look and bearing she recognised the evidence of conscious power, chastened by the discipline of a mind great enough to rule itself. Nor was she wrong in her conjectures; only she mistook a part for the whole, and arguing with the gentle sophistry of a woman's loving heart, concluded that to be finished which was but in fact begun. Lewis had learned to *control* (except in rare instances) his haughty nature, but he relied

too much on his own strength, and so he had failed as yet to *subdue* it. Rose was too honest to disguise the truth from herself when it was fairly placed before her, and she acknowledged, with an aching heart that the great fault of her brother's character yet remained unconquered. Poor Rose! as this conviction forced itself upon her, how she sorrowed over it. He was so good, so noble, and she loved him so entirely—oh! why was he not perfect? If Lewis could have read her thoughts at that moment he would have assuredly made one of the guests at Lady Lombard's hospitable board.

As the clock struck the half-hour, forming the *juste milieu* between seven and eight, post meridiem, the goodly company assembled in Lady Lombard's drawing-room, being warned by the portly butler that dinner was served, paired off and betook themselves two by two (like the animals coming out of Noah's Ark, as represented on the dissecting puzzles of childhood) to the lofty dining-room, where much English good cheer, disguised under absurd French names, awaited them. During the short time that Bracy had been in the house he had not been altogether idle. He first took an opportunity of informing Lady Lombard that De Grandeville was directly descended from Charlemagne, and that he was only waiting till the death of an opulent relative should render him independent of his profession to revive a dormant peerage, when it was generally supposed his colossal intellect and unparalleled legal acumen would render him political leader of the House of Lords; he then congratulated her on her good fortune in having secured the presence of this illustrious individual, who, he assured her, was in such request amongst the aristocracy of the kingdom that he was scarcely ever to be found disengaged, and wound up by running glibly through a long list of noble names with whom he declared the mighty Marmaduke to be hand and glove. Accordingly, good Lady Lombard, believing it all faithfully, mentally elected De Grandeville to the post of honour at her right hand, deposing for the purpose no less a personage than General Gudgeon. When we say no less a personage, we speak advisedly, for that gallant officer, weighing sixteen stone without his snuff-box, and being fully six feet high, was, if not exactly "a Triton amongst minnows," at all events a Goliath amongst gudgeons, which we conceive to be much the same thing.

Having achieved his object of placing De Grandeville in exactly the position he wished him to occupy, Bracy next proceeded to frustrate a scheme which he perceived the fair Susanna (who was his pet antipathy) to have originated for the amatory subjugation and matrimonial acquisition of John Dace Dackerel Dace, Esq., of Roachpool, in the West Riding. The aforesaid John D. D. had a weakness bordering indeed on a mental hallucination; he fancied he was born to be a popular author—"to go down to posterity upon the tongues of men," as he himself was wont to express it—and the way in which he attempted to fulfil his exalted destiny and effect the wished-for transit, *viâ* these unruly members of his fellow-mortals, was by writing mild, dull articles, signed J. D. D., and sending them to the editors of various magazines, by whom they were always unhesitatingly rejected.

The frequent repetition of these most unkind rebuffs, and the consequent delay in the fulfilment of his mission, had tended to depress the spirit (at no time an intensely ardent one) of John Dace Dackerel, and had induced a morbid habit of mind, through which, as through a yellow veil, he took a jaundiced view of society at large; and even the acquisition of the surname of Dace, and his accession to the glories of Roachpool, had scarcely sufficed to restore cheerfulness to this victim of a postponed destiny. Bracy, from his connection with Blunt's Magazine, knew him well, and had rejected, only a fortnight since, a forlorn little paper entitled "The Curse of Genius, or the Trammelled Soul's Remonstrance;" in which his own cruel position was touchingly shadowed forth in the weakest possible English. Accosting this son of sorrow in a confidential tone of voice, Bracy began—

"As soon as you can spare a minute to listen to me, I've something rather particular to tell you!"

"To tell *me*?" returned the blighted barrister in a hollow voice, suggestive of any amount of black crape hatbands. "What ill news have I now to arm, or I may say, to steel my soul against?" And here he observed that it was a habit with this pseudo-author to talk, as it were, a rough copy of conversation, which he from time to time corrected by the substitution of some word or phrase which he conceived to be an improvement upon the original text.

"Perhaps it may be good news instead of bad!" remarked Bracy encouragingly. The blighted one shook his head.

"Not for *me*," he murmured; then turning to Susanna, he continued, "Excuse my interrupting our conversation, but this gentleman has some intelligence to impart—or I may say, to break to me."

Mrs. Brahmin smiled sweetly such a sympathetic smile that it went straight through a black satin waistcoat, with a cypress wreath embroidered on it in sad-coloured silk, and reached the "crushed and withered" heart of J. D. D.

"You know," continued Bracy, "I was obliged, most unwillingly, to decline that touching little thing of yours. The—what is it? the Cough of Genius?"

"The Curse," suggested its author gloomily.

"Ah! yes. I read it cough—you don't write very clearly—yes, 'the Cursing Genius.' You know, my dear Dace, we editors are placed in a very trying position. A great responsibility devolves upon us; we are scarcely free agents. Now your article affected me deeply" (this was strictly true, for he had laughed over the most tragic touches till the tears ran down his cheeks), "but I was forced to decline it. I could not have put it in if my own brother had written it. You will naturally ask, Why? *Because it did not suit the tone of Blunt's Magazine!*" And as Bracy pronounced these awful and mysterious words he shook his head and looked unutterable things; while the "child of a postponed destiny," seeing the shadow of a still further postponement clouding his dark horizon, shook his head likewise, and relieved his elaborately-worked shirt-front of a sigh.

"But," resumed Bracy, "thinking the paper much too original to be lost, I took the liberty of handing it over to Bullbait, the Editor

of the Olla Podrida. Well, sir, I saw him this morning, and he said——”

“What?” exclaimed the fated one eagerly, a hectic tinge colouring his sallow cheek.

“Don’t excite yourself, my dear Dace,” rejoined Bracy anxiously; “you’re looking pale: too much brain work, I’m afraid. You must take care of yourself; so many of our greatest geniuses have died young. But I see you’re impatient. Bullbait said—he’s a very close, cautious character, never likes to commit himself, but he actually said, *he’d think about it!*”

“Was that all?” groaned the disappointed Dace, relapsing into despondency.

“All! my dear sir? all! Why, what would you have? When a man like Bullbait says he’ll think about a thing, I consider it a case of *opus operatum*—reckon the deed done. If he meant to refuse your paper, what need has he to think about it? No, Mr. Dace, if you’re not correcting a proof of the ‘Cough’—pssha, ‘Curse,’ I mean—(when one once takes a wrong idea into one’s head how difficult it is to get it out again!) before the week is over, I’m no prophet. By the way,” he continued, as Rose, looking better than pretty in the whitest of muslin frocks, resigned a comfortable seat to a cross old lady in a gaudy turban, which gave her the appearance, from the neck upwards, of a plain male Turk, liberally endowed with the attributes commonly assigned to his nation by writers of fairy tales and other light literature for the nursery, amongst which man-stealing and cannibalism are two of the least atrocious—“by the way, I must introduce you to this young lady; a kindred soul, sir, one of the most rising authoresses of the day.”

“No, I really——” began the Dace, flapping about in the extremity of his shyness like one of his fishy namesakes abstracted from its native element.

“Nonsense,” resumed Bracy, enjoying his embarrassment. “Miss Arundel, let me have the pleasure of making you acquainted with one of our men of genius, a writer to whom a liberal posterity will no doubt do justice, however the trammelled sycophants of a clique may combine to delay his intellectual triumphs.” Then in an aside to J. D. D. he added, “Make play with her; Bullbait wants her particularly to write for the Olla, and she hangs back at present: she would merely have to say a word to him, and you might obtain the run of the magazine.”

Thus urged, John Dace Dackerel Dace, Esq., called up all the energies of his nature, and by their assistance overcoming his habitual sheepishness, he caused to descend upon Rose a torrent of pathetic small-talk which overwhelmed that young lady till dinner was announced, when he claimed her arm and floated with her down the stream of descending humanity until he found himself safely moored by her side at the dinner-table.

Bracy having thus, as he would himself have expressed it, taken the change out of that odd fish Dace, and frustrated, for the time being, the matrimonial tactics of the Brahmin’s widow, was making his way

through the various groups of people in search of Miss MacSalvo, whose rampant Protestantism might, he considered, afford him some sport if judiciously handled, when he was suddenly intercepted by the innocent Susanna with the inquiry, "Pray, Mr. Bracy, can you explain this wonderful metamorphosis in your friend Mr. Frere? He's grown quite handsome."

Thus appealed to, Bracy regarded attentively the individual in question, who was good-naturedly turning over a book of prints for Lady Gudgeon, a little shrivelled old lady, so deaf as to render conversation with her a pursuit of politeness under difficulties. Having apparently satisfied himself by this investigation, Bracy replied, "To the best of my belief, I should say he had only had his hair cut, and was for once dressed like a gentleman."

"He is wonderfully clever, is he not?" inquired the lady.

"Clever!" repeated Bracy. "That's a mild word to apply to such acquirements as Frere rejoices in. He knows all the languages, living or dead; possesses an intimate acquaintance with the arts and sciences, has all the 'ologies' at his fingers' ends, and is not only well up in the history of man since the creation, but will tell you to a fraction how many feeds a day kept a Mastodon in good condition two or three thousand years before we tailless monkeys came into possession of our landed property."

"I suppose, as he dresses so strangely in general, that he's very poor: all clever people are, I believe," returned Susanna, with an air of the most artless *naïveté*, the idea having for the first time occurred to her that, *faute de mieux*, the philosopher might do to replace the man of war.

Bracy read her thoughts, and kindly invented a few facts and figures by which he increased Frere's income about sevenfold, and gave him a magnificent stock of expectations, regarding the realisation whereof not the most forlorn hope ever existed.

Having done this small piece of mischief also, he continued his search after Miss MacSalvo. The result of these machinations was that Lady Lombard signified to De Grandeville that he was to hand her down to dinner; John Dace Dackerel Dace, Esquire, performed the same office by Rose, much to the disgust of Richard Frere, who had intended to secure that pleasure for himself, and who being, at the moment in which he first became aware of his misfortune, captured by the Brahminical widow, whose silky manner he could not endure, went downstairs in a frame of mind anything but seraphic. Mrs. Arundel contrived to gain possession of General Gudgeon, with a view, as she observed to Bracy, to discover, firstly, his system of feeding, which, from its results, she felt sure must be an excellent one; and secondly, to ensure his obtaining a liberal supply of port wine, to the end that she might satisfy a reprehensible curiosity as to the precise nature of the "gentleman's stories" Lady Lombard was so anxious to suppress; which act of un-*English*-woman-like *espiglerie* must be set down to the score of a foreign education, than which we know not a better receipt for unsexing the minds of the daughters of Albion. When we add that Bracy, with a face of prim decorum, escorted Miss

MacSalvo, a gaunt female, whose spirit appeared to have warred with her flesh so effectually that there was little more than skin and bone left, we believe we have accounted for every member of the party in whom our readers are likely to feel the slightest interest.

During the era of the fish and soup, by which our modern dinners are invariably commenced, little is discussed except the viands; but after the first glass of sherry mute lips begin to unclose, and conversation flows more freely. Thus it came about that John Dace Dackerel Dace, Esquire, of the Inner Temple (we admire his name so much that we lose no opportunity of repeating it), having revolved in his anxious mind some fitting speech wherewith to accost the talented young authoress, of whom he felt no inconsiderable degree of dread, fortified himself with an additional sip of sherry ere he propounded the very original inquiry, "Whether Miss Arundel was fond of poetry?" Before Rose could answer this query her neighbour on the other side, one Mr. James Rasper, a very strong young man with a broad, good-natured, dullish face, demanded abruptly, in a jovial tone of voice, "Whether she was fond of riding?"

As soon as she could collect her senses, scattered by the raking fire of this cross-examination, Rose replied "that she was particularly fond of some kinds of poetry," which admission she qualified by the apparently inapposite restriction—"When she was on a very quiet horse."

J. D. D. was about to follow up his attack by a leading question in regard to the gushing pathos of the bard of Rydal, when Rasper prevented him by exclaiming, "No! Do you really?" (which he called "raily"). "Then I know just the animal that would suit you." And having thus mounted his hobby-horse he dashed at everything, as was his wont when once fairly off, and rattled away, without stopping, till dinner was finished, and he had talked Rose completely stupid; while the unfortunate Dace, foiled in his weak attempt to captivate the influential authoress, plunged again into the deep waters of affliction, where, pondering over this further postponement of his destiny, he sank, and was heard no more.

Exactly opposite to Rose and her companions sat Frere and the simple Susanna, who, labouring zealously at her vocation—viz., husband-hunting—threw away much flattery and wasted an incalculable amount of "sweetness on the desert air." To all her pretty speeches Frere returned monosyllabic replies in a tone of voice suggestive of whole forests full of bears with sore heads, while a cloud hung heavy on his brow, and his bright eyes flashed envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness at the unconscious James Rasper. At last Susanna chanced to inquire whether he were fond of music; and as, without falsifying facts, he could not answer this negatively, he was forced to reply, "Yes; I like some sort of music well enough."

"Some sort only," returned Susanna in a tone of infantine artlessness. "Oh! you should like every kind, Mr. Frere. I never hear a merry tune without longing to dance to it, and pathetic music affects me even to tears. But what class of music is it that you particularly prefer?—though I need scarcely ask—operatic, of course."

"Not I," growled Frere; "I hate your operas."

"Oh, Mr. Frere!" exclaimed Simplicity, fixing its large eyes reproachfully upon him, "you can't mean what you say. Not like operas! Why, they are perfectly delicious. Look at a well-filled house—what a magnificent *coup d'œil!*"

"A set of pigeon-holes full of fools, and a long row of fiddlers," rejoined Frere; "I can't say I see much to admire in that. I went to one of your operas last year, and a rare waste of time I thought it. It was one of Walter Scott's Scotch stories bewitched into Italian. There was poor Lucy of Lammernoor dressed out like a fashionable drawing-room belle, singing duets all about love and murder with a pale-faced, moustachioed puppy, as much like Edgar Ravenswood as I am like the Belvidere Apollo—a brute engaged, on the strength of a tenor voice, to make love to all and sundry for the space of four calendar months, for which 'labour of love' he is paid to the tune of £500 a month, a salary on which better men than himself contrive to live for a whole year. Then Lucy's cruel mamma, who is the great feature in the novel, was metamorphosed into a rascally brother, who growled baritone atrocities into the ears of a sympathising chorus of indigent needle-women and assistant carpenters, who act the nobility and gentry of Scotland at half-a-crown a head and their beer. The first act is all love and leave-taking, the second all cursing and confusion, and the third all madness and misery: and that's what people call a pleasant evening's amusement. The only thing that amused me was in the last scene, when the stipendiary lover kills himself first and sings a long scena afterwards. I thought that very praiseworthy and persevering of him, and if I'd been Lucy such a little attention as that would have touched me particularly, and I dare say it would have done her, only—seeing that she had died raving mad some five minutes before, and was then drinking bottled porter in her dressing-room for the good of her voice—she was perhaps scarcely in a situation to appreciate it."

"But if you don't like the singing, I dare say you prefer the ballet?" suggested Susanna.

"No, I don't," was the short, sharp, and decisive reply.

"Not like the ballet? Oh! Mr. Frere, what can be your reason?" inquired the surprised turtle-dove.

"Well, I have a reason good and sufficient, but I shan't tell it to you," growled Frere; then muttered as an aside, which was, however, sufficiently audible, "A set of jumping Jezebels skipping about in white muslin kilts, for they're nothing better; respectable people ought to be ashamed of looking at 'em." Having enunciated this opinion, Frere cast a doubly ferocious glance at Mr. Rasper, then eloquently describing to Rose the points of his favourite hunter, and relapsed into surly monosyllables, beyond which no amount of cooing could again tempt him.

Marmaduke de Grandeville, enthroned in state on the right hand of the lady of the house, gazed regally around him, and in the plenitude of his magnificence was wonderful to behold. But, after all, he *was* human, and the evident depth and reality of Lady Lombard's admira-

tion and respect softened even him, so that ere long he graciously condescended to eat, drink and talk—not like an ordinary mortal, for that he never did, but like himself. For instance, the topic under discussion being the new Houses of Parliament, then in even a more unfinished state than they are at present, De Grandeville elaborately explained the whole design, every detail of which he appeared to have at his fingers' ends—a fact for which he accounted when he allowed it to be understood that—"Ar—he had—ar—given Barry a hint or two—ar—that Barry was a very sensible fellow, and not above—ar—acting upon an idea when he saw it to be a good one;" and it must be owned that as De Grandeville had only once been in Mr. Barry's company, on which occasion he had sat opposite to him at a public dinner, he had made the best use of his time, and not suffered his powers of penetration to rust for want of use. Having in imagination put the finishing-stroke to the Victoria Tower (one of the furthest stretches of fancy on record, we should conceive), he contrived to work the conversation round to military matters, set General Gudgeon right on several points referring to battles in the Peninsula at which the General had himself been present, and gave so graphic an account of Waterloo, that to this day Lady Lombard believes he acted as Amateur Aide-du-Camp and Privy Counsellor-in-Chief to the Duke of Wellington on that memorable occasion. He then talked about the De Grandeville estates till every one present believed him to be an immense landed proprietor, and wound up by the anecdote of William of Normandy and the original De Grandeville, which, with a slight biographical sketch of certain later worthies of the family (one of whom, Sir Solomon de Grandeville, he declared to have suggested to King Charles the advisability of hiding in the oak), lasted till the ladies quitted the room, when, by Lady Lombard's request, he assumed her vacant chair, and did the honours with dignified courtesy.

Bracy, who during dinner had appeared most devoted to Miss MacSalvo, now endeavoured to render himself universally agreeable. He applauded General Gudgeon's stories, and plied him vigorously with port wine, which, as Mrs. Arundel had taken care the servants did not neglect to replenish his wine-glass at dinner, began to tell upon him visibly. He elicited the names, pedigrees, and performances of all Mr. James Rasper's horses, and received from that fast young man a confidential statement of his last year's betting account, together with a minute detail of how he had executed that singular horticultural operation yclept "hedging on the Oaks," during which dry recital his throat required constantly moistening with wine, in spite of which precaution his voice grew exceedingly thick and husky before the sitting concluded. On two individuals of the party, however, all Bracy's efforts were thrown away: Frere continued silent and moody, only opening his lips occasionally, shortly and sternly to contradict some assertion, and relapsing into his former taciturnity; while J. D. D. sat silently bewailing his postponed destiny over a glass of water and two ratafia cakes, which seemed to possess the singular property of never diminishing.

At length the gentlemen rose to go upstairs, a matter easily

accomplished by every one but General Gudgeon, who made three unsuccessful attempts to get under weigh, and then looked helplessly round for assistance. Bracy, the ever-ready, was at hand in an instant.

"My dear General, let me lend you an arm. You're cramped from sitting so long."

"Tha-a-ank you, my dear bo-o-oy," returned the gallant officer, who appeared to have been seized with a sudden, wild determination to alter the English language by dividing monosyllables into three parts, and otherwise fancifully to embellish his mother-tongue. "Tha-a-ank you! It's that confou-wow-wow-nded gun-shot wound in my knee-ee. I got it at Bu-Bu-Bu—no! not Bucellas. What is it, eh?"

"Busaco," suggested Bracy, fearing he had over-dosed his patient.

However, when once the General got upon his legs he used them to better advantage than might have been expected, and proceeded upstairs, "rolling grand," as that prince of clever-simple biographers (to adopt one of Mrs. Browning's double-barrelled adjectives), Boswell, said of his ponderous idol. Encountering Frere at the foot of the staircase, he stumbled against that gentleman with so much force as nearly to knock him down. As he recovered his footing Frere turned angrily towards his assailant; but his irritation changed to an expression of contemptuous pity as his eye fell upon the white hair of General Gudgeon, and stepping on one side, he allowed him to pass. He was quietly following, when Mr. James Rasper, who had witnessed his discomfiture with an ill-bred laugh, excited by the wine he had drank, attempted, by way of a stupid practical joke, to repeat General Gudgeon's involuntary assault, and reckoning Frere a good-natured, quiet sort of person, not likely to resent such a jest, pretended to stumble against him, and pushed past him when about half-way up the first flight of stairs. Never did a man (to use a common but forcible expression) "mistake his customer" more completely. In an instant Frere had collared him, dragged him down a step or two, then retaining his grasp of the coat-collar, seized him by the waist-band of his trousers, and by a great exertion of strength, swung him clear over the banisters, lowered him till his feet were about a yard from the floor, and then let him drop. After which performance, having glanced round to see that his victim was not injured by the fall, he coolly pursued his way upstairs.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IS IN TWO FYTTES—VIZ., FYTTE THE FIRST, A SULKY FIT—FYTTE THE SECOND, A FIT OF HYSTERICIS.

FRERE reached the drawing-room in a state of mind which the occurrences related in the last chapter had not tended to render more amiable. The front room was evidently the more popular of the two, a numerous group being gathered round Mrs. Brahmin, who in the

sweetest of mild sopranos was daintily cooing forth a plaintive love-ditty, which was evidently telling well with John Dace, D.D. Avoiding the crowd, Frere made his way into the back drawing-room, which, barring an ardent flirtation in a corner between two poor young things who could not, by the most remote possibility, marry for the next fifteen years, was unoccupied. Here seating himself astride across a chair as if it had been a horse, and leaning his arms on the back, he fell into a deep fit of musing. From this he was roused by the approach of a light footstep, and looking up, perceived Rose Arundel.

"Why, Mr. Frere," she exclaimed playfully, "I do believe you were asleep; will you not come into the other room? Mrs. Brahmin is singing like a nightingale and charming everybody."

"Nightingales are humbugs. I hate singing women in general, and abominate Mrs. Brahmin in particular, so I'm better where I am," was the grumpy reply.

Rose had often before received speeches from Frere quite as rude as the present one, but in this instance there was a peculiarity in his method of delivering it which at once struck her attention. Usually his bearish sayings were accompanied by a half-smile or merry twinkle of the eye, which proved that he was more than half in jest, but now there was a bitter earnestness in his tone which she had never before remarked, and Rose felt at once that something had occurred to annoy him; so she quietly drew a chair to the table near which he was seated, and carelessly turning over the pages of a book of prints which lay before her, observed—

"If you are not to be tempted within the siren's influence, and positively refuse to be charmed with sweets sounds, I suppose I am bound by all the rules of politeness to remain here and try to talk you into a more harmonious frame of mind."

"Pray do nothing of the kind," returned Frere, "unless you've some better reason than a mere compliance with what you please to term 'the rules of politeness,' for they are things I trouble my head about mighty little. Besides," he added sarcastically, "your new friend, Mr. James Rasper, must have found his way upstairs by this time, I should imagine, and I should be sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of his intellectual conversation, more particularly as you seem to appreciate it so thoroughly."

"How viciously you said that!" returned Rose, smiling. "But tell me, are you really angry? have I done anything to annoy you? I'm sure it's most unwittingly on my part, if I have;" and as she spoke she looked so good, and so willing to be penitent for any possible offence, that a man must have had the heart of an ogre to have resisted her. Such a heart, however, Frere appeared to possess, for he answered shortly—

"No, I've no fault to find with you. I dare say it may be quite according to the 'rules of politeness' to cast off old friends and take up with new ones at a minute's notice, and be completely engrossed by them, though they may contrive to talk about horses till they prove themselves little better than asses to the mind of an unprejudiced

auditor. There *is* your friend conversing eagerly with Bracy, asking, no doubt, what has become of you."

"You are very unjust, Mr. Frere," returned Rose, looking hard at her book and speaking eagerly and quickly. "Mr. Rasper is no friend of mine; I scarcely knew his name till you mentioned it. He sat next me at dinner, and talked to me about horses and galloping over ploughed fields after foxes, till I became so stupid that I had scarcely two ideas left in my head, but of course I was bound to answer him civilly. So much for my new friend, as you call him; what you mean by my casting off old ones I don't at all know; I have done nothing of the kind that I am aware of."

"No, you have not," returned Frere, recalled to his better self by Rose's harangue; "it is I who am, as you say, unjust and absurd, but the honest truth is that I wanted to talk to you myself. All these good people are bores more or less, none of 'em able to converse rationally for five minutes together. I meant to have handed you down to dinner, but that silky, scheming widow got hold of me instead and irritated me with her bland platitudes; and then I heard that idiot prating to you about horses' legs, and you appeared so well satisfied with him, when I knew that you were one of the few women who could understand and appreciate better things, that altogether I grew savage, and could gladly have punched my own head or any one else's."

"It is quite as well Mr. Rasper was on the opposite side of the table to you," returned Rose, "or you might have carried out your theoretical inclinations by practising on him, and then we should have had a scene."

Frere looked a little awkward and conscious as he replied—

"Though I am a bear, I am not quite such a savage animal as all that comes to; I do not give the fatal hug unless I am attacked first."

At this moment Bracy and Mr. Rasper, whose backs were turned towards them, approached within earshot. The latter appeared much excited, and Rose heard him say—

"It's no use talking, I've been grossly insulted, sir, and if you won't take my message to him, by — I'll take it myself, and give him as good as he gave me, or perhaps a little better."

Frere heard him also, and a flash of anger passed across his features.

"My dear Rasper, you're excited," returned Bracy soothingly. "I did not witness the affair certainly, but I cannot think that any insult was intended. Frere is rough in his manner, but the best-hearted fellow in the world."

"I don't know what *you* may consider an insult, Mr. Bracy; but taking a man by the collar and swinging him over the banisters like a cat, at the risk of his neck, is quite insult enough for me, one for which I'll have satisfaction, too."

"Hush, my dear fellow, you'll attract general attention if you speak so loud. Here, come aside with me, and we'll talk the matter over quietly."

So saying, he drew Rasper's arm within his own, and led him through a side door which opened upon the staircase. Involuntarily glancing at his companion, Frere perceived her eyes riveted on his features with an expression of alarmed inquiry.

"Well, what's the matter?" he demanded, answering her speaking look.

"What is that man so angry about?" returned Rose breathlessly; "what have you been doing?"

"Nothing very wonderful," rejoined Frere coolly. "The young gentleman, as I suppose one is bound to call him, drank rather more wine than was prudent, and fancying I looked a quiet, easy-tempered kind of person, by way of a dull jest, indulged himself with falling against and rudely pushing by me on the staircase; and I, not being at the moment in the humour for joking, did, as he very truly observes, swing him like a cat over the banisters, where, cat-like, he fell upon his legs."

"Oh, Mr. Frere, how could you do such a thing? And now he is dreadfully angry, and talked about sending you a message, which means that he wants to fight a duel. Mr. Frere, you will not fight with him?" and as Rose spoke her pale cheek flushed with unwonted animation, and tears, scarcely repressed, glistened in her earnest eyes.

"What do you think about it?" returned Frere, looking at her with a kind smile.

"Oh, I think, I hope, you are too good, too wise, to do such a thing. For Lewis's sake, for the sake of all your friends, you will refrain."

"For a better reason still, my dear, warm-hearted little friend," returned Frere kindly but solemnly; "for God's sake I will not break His commandment, or incur the guilt of shedding a fellow-creature's blood. But," he added, "all this folly has frightened you;" and as he spoke he took her little trembling hand in his and stroked it caressingly, and this time it was not withdrawn.

"Then you will apologise, I suppose," Rose observed after a short pause.

"Well, we'll hope that may not be necessary," returned her companion, "seeing that Rasper the infuriated was more to blame in the affair than I was; but if the good youth is so obtuse that nothing less will quiet him, I suppose I must accommodate his stupidity by doing so. It is a less evil to pocket one's dignity for once in a way than to murder or be murdered in support of it."

At this moment Bracy entered the room *solo*, with such a vexed and anxious expression of countenance that Frere, who guessed rightly at the cause, could, though he liked him the better for it, scarcely forbear smiling.

"Go back to your singing widow," observed Frere to Rose, "and when I have administered his sop to Cerberus I will come and tell you what wry faces he has made in swallowing it."

Rose fixed her eyes on him with a scrutinising glance, and reading in his honest face that he was not deceiving her, smiled on him approvingly, and rising, quietly mingled with the company in the front drawing-room.

"I say, Frere," began Bracy as Rose disappeared, "I'm sadly afraid you have got into a tiresome scrape. That young fool, Rasper, declares you've pitched him over the banisters."

"A true bill so far, and richly he deserved it," returned Frere.

"I can well believe that," was Bracy's reply, "for he was more than half screwed when he left the dinner-table; but the shake appears to have sobered him into a state of the most lively vindictiveness. However, it's no laughing matter, I can assure you: he has sent you a message by me, and means fighting."

"*He* may, but *I* don't," returned Frere shortly.

"My dear Frere, I wish I could make you understand that the affair is serious. Rasper's determined to have you out. I can make no impression upon him, and you can't refuse to meet a man after pitching him over the banisters," rejoined Bracy in a tone of annoyance.

"Can't I, though?" returned Frere, smiling. "I'm not of such a yielding disposition as you imagine. Where is the sweet youth?"

"I left him in the cloak-room," answered Bracy; and as Frere immediately turned to descend the stairs, continued, "Pon my word, you'd better not go near him: he's especially savage. Depend upon it, you will have something disagreeable occur."

"Do you think I'm going to be forced into fighting a duel, a sin of the first magnitude in my eyes, because I'm afraid of meeting an angry boy? You don't know me yet," returned Frere sternly; and without waiting further parley he ran downstairs, followed by Bracy, with a face of the most comic perplexity. The door of the cloak-room stood half open, and at the further end of the apartment might be perceived the outraged Rasper, pacing up and down like a caged lion, "nursing his wrath to keep it warm." Unintimidated even by this tremendous spectacle, Frere coolly entered the room, and immediately walked up to his late antagonist, holding out his hand.

"Come, Mr. Rasper," he said, "this has been a foolish business altogether, and the sooner we mutually forget it the better. Here's my hand: let's be friends."

That this was a mode of procedure on which Mr. Rasper had not calculated was evident, as well by his extreme embarrassment as by his appearing completely at a loss what course to pursue. For a moment he seemed half inclined to accept Frere's proffered hand; but his eye fell upon Bracy, and probably recalling the threats he had breathed forth in the hearing of that worthy individual, he felt that his dignity was at stake; and giving himself a shake to re-arouse his indignation, he replied, "I shall do no such thing, sir. You have grossly insulted me, and I demand satisfaction."

"Excuse me," returned Frere quietly, "I did not insult you: I simply would not allow you to insult me; no man worthy of the name would."

"It's no use jangling about it, like a couple of women. *I* consider that you have insulted me: what *you* may think matters nothing to me. I have been insulted, I require satisfaction, and I mean to have it too," reiterated Mr. Rasper, talking himself into a passion,

"Now, listen to me," returned Frere impressively. "You are a younger man than I am, and have probably, therefore, more of life before you. You are of an age and temperament to enjoy life vividly. There are many that love you; I can answer for three, for I met your mother and two sisters at Lord Ambergate's a fortnight since, and the kind creatures entertained me for half-an-hour with your praises. Why, then, seek to throw away your own life and embitter theirs, or bring upon your head the guilt of homicide, entailing banishment from your home and country, and other evil consequences, merely because, having drunk a few extra glasses of wine, you sought to play off a practical joke upon me, and I, not being at the moment in a jesting humour, retaliated upon you, as you, or any other man of spirit, would have done in my situation? Come, look at it in a common sense point of view: is this a cause for which to lose a life or take one?"

After waiting a moment for a reply, during which time Rasper stood gnawing the finger of his white glove in irresolution, Frere resumed—

"If you're sorry for your share in the matter, I'm perfectly willing to own that I am for mine; and now, once more, here's my hand—what do you say?"

"Say, that you're a regular out-and-out good fellow, and that I'm a —d ass, and beg your pardon heartily," was the energetic rejoinder; and bringing his hand down upon Frere's with a smack that re-echoed through the room, Rasper and his late antagonist shook hands with the strength and energy of a brace of giants; and then, both talking at once with the greatest volubility, they ascended the stairs arm in arm, Bracy following them, with his left eye fixed in a species of chronic wink, expressive of any amount of the most intense satisfaction and sagacity. As they re-entered the drawing-room, Rose, whose powers of hearing, always acute, were in the present instance rendered still more so by anxiety, caught the following words: "Then you promise you will dine with me at Lovegrove's on Thursday, and I'll pick up half-a-dozen fellows that I know you'll like to meet, regular top-sawyers, that you're safe to find in the first flight, be it where it may."

"Only on condition that you come to my rooms on Friday and bring your brother, and we'll show you sporting men how we book-worms live—Bracy, we shall see you?"

"You'll dine with us, too, at Blackwall, Mr. Bracy," rejoined the first speaker, who was none other than the redoubtable Rasper. And numerous other genial sentences of like import reached the ear and comforted the heart of that little philanthropist, Rose Arundel, who could no more bear to see her fellow-creatures disagree than could Dr. Watts, when in his benevolence he indicted that pretty hymn which begins—

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature to!"

then proceeds to state the interesting ornithological fact that

"Birds in their little nests agree,"

and touchingly appeals to the nobler instincts of childhood in the pathetic metrical remonstrance—

“ Those little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes.”

Oh ! excellent and prosy Watts, doer of dull, moral platitudes into duller doggerel, co-tormentor with Pinnock and the Latin grammar of my early boyhood, would that for thy sake I had the pen of Thomas Carlyle, for then would I write thee down that which I suspect thou wast, my Watts, in most resonant un-English, nay, I would make thee the subject of a “ Latter-Day Pamphlet,” and treating of thee in connection with the *vexata questio* of prison discipline, would by thy aid invent a new and horrible punishment for refractory felons, who in lieu of handcuffs and bread and water, hard labour, or solitary confinement, should straightway be condemned to a severe course of “ Watts' Hymns.”

Thomas Bracy, his mind being relieved from the *onus* of this rather serious episode in his evening's amusement, now cast his eyes around to discover how the various schemes projected by his fertile brain might be progressing. The first group that met his eye afforded him unmixed satisfaction—Lady Lombard, seated on a low fauteuil, was listening with delighted attention to De Grandeville, who, hanging over her, was talking eagerly (about himself) with an air of the most lover-like devotion. The next pair that his glance fell upon scarcely pleased him so well, for Mrs. Brahmin had again hooked the Dace, and appeared in a fair way of landing him safely. “ However,” reflected Bracy, “ one comfort is that he's such an awful fool he will bore her to death in less than a week after they're married, and she'll revenge herself by flirting with every man she meets, which is safe to worry him to distraction, and they'll be a wretched, miserable couple ; so I really believe there'll be more comedy evolved by letting them alone than by interfering with them ;” and consoling himself with this agreeable view of the matter, he turned his attention to the state, mental and physical, of General Gudgeon. That gallant son of Mars, as though conscious of the hopes and fears that were abroad concerning his possible behaviour, was taking the best method of neutralising the dangerous effects of his devotion to Bacchus by composing himself to sleep in a mighty arm-chair. Next him was seated Miss MacSalvo, who was engaged in a truly edifying conversation with Mrs. Dackerel, mother to the “ postponed one,” on the propriety of establishing a female Missionary Society for the prevention of Polygamy amongst the Aborigines of the North-Eastern Districts of South-West Australia ; an evil which both ladies agreed to be mainly owing to the fact that the women did not know how to conduct themselves like the women of civilised nations ; a fact to which Bracy assented by observing “ that was self-evident, or the men would find one wife quite enough ;” on which Miss MacSalvo turned up the whites, or more properly speaking, the yellows of her eyes, and ejaculated, “ Ah, yes indeed !” with much unction, though it is to be doubted whether after all she perceived the full force of the remark.

"Why, General," exclaimed Bracy quickly, "*you* have been in Australia; you're the very man we want; rouse up, my dear sir, and enlighten our darkness."

"Pray, sir," observed Miss MacSalvo, addressing General Gudgeon, "pray, sir, can you give me any insight into the habits and customs of those interesting, but, alas! misguided individuals, the Aborigines of South Australia; more particularly with reference to the female portion of the population—any little anecdotes which may occur to you now?"

"By Jo-o-ove, ma'am," returned the General, whose English had not yet "suffered a recovery," "you've come to—you've come to the right, eh—to the, the right, what-is-it?"

"Shop," suggested Bracy.

"Ye-es, to the right sho-op, if that's what you want, ma'am. I should think there ain't a man—there ain't a man—eh? yes, breathing—that can tell you more—eh? more about larks——"

"It is scarcely with a view to the ornithology of the country that I am anxious to gain information," interrupted Miss MacSalvo; "the facts I require regard the general behaviour and moral conduct of the female population of the north-eastern district."

"Eh! oh, yes—yes, I under—I understand what you're up to, eh?" resumed the General, with what he intended for a significant wink at Bracy; "there was Tom Slasher and me—a rare wild young, eh? yes, a wild young dog was Tom; well, ma'am, there was a gal over there—she wasn't one of the natives, though—they're taw-taw—yes, tawny coloured—but this gal was a nigger—reg'lar darkie—Black-*hide* Susan, Tom used to call her—witty chap was Tom."

And the General being fairly started, continued to talk most volubly, though, from the peculiarities of his diction, he did not get to the point of his story so quickly as might have been expected. In the meantime Frere contrived to rejoin Rose, and seating himself almost in her pocket, observed in a low voice—

"Well, I've managed to tame the dragon, you see."

"Yes, and persuaded him to dine *with* you instead of *upon* you," returned Rose, smiling; "but tell me," she added, "how did you contrive to satisfy him. Were you forced to apologise?"

"Oh, I put the thing before him in a common sense point of view," replied Frere; "appealed to his good feeling as if I had faith in his possessing such a quality, which is the sure way to call it forth if it exists, and wound up by telling him that if he was sorry for his share in the business, I was ditto for mine, which mode of treatment proved eminently successful. He applied a forcible adjective to the word ass, and stigmatising himself by the epithet thus compounded, he shook me heartily by the hand, and straightway we became the greatest friends, ratifying the contract by an exchange of dinner invitations, without which ceremony no solemn league and covenant is considered binding in England in these days of enlightened civilisation."

"Well, I think you have behaved more bravely and nobly than if you had fought twenty duels," exclaimed Rose, fairly carried away by her admiration. "I esteem and respect you, and—and——!" Here she stopped short, and a bright blush overspread her pale features,

for she perceived Frere's fine eyes fixed upon her with an expression of delighted surprise which she had never observed in them before, and which brought to her recollection the fact that, after all, he was a living man not many years older than herself, instead of some magnanimous, philosophical, and heroic character in history done into modern English and animated by magic for her express delectation. The light in Frere's eyes had, however, faded, and he had relapsed into his accustomed manner ere he replied: "I can't say I see anything to make a fuss about in it. I wasn't going to allow a half-tipsy boy to insult me with impunity, so I pitched him over the banisters as a trifling hint to that effect; neither did I feel inclined to shoot him, or let him shoot me, by way of compensation for his tumble, because it would have been equally wrong and irrational so to do, and I went and told him my ideas in plain English, which was the natural course to pursue, and produced the desired effect. I really can't see anything remarkable in it all."

"I fancy that I do," replied Rose archly; "but of course we poor women cannot pretend to be competent judges in such a case."

"You know you don't think anything of the kind," returned Frere; "you've got a very good opinion of your own judgment, so don't tell stories."

"Without either admitting or denying the truth of your assertion, I should like to know what grounds you have for making it?" asked Rose.

"I can soon tell you, if that's all you want to know," returned Frere. "You could not act for yourself with the quiet decision I have before now seen you exercise when occasion required it unless you possessed self-appreciation sufficient to give you the requisite degree of confidence."

Ere Rose could reply their conversation was interrupted by a piercing shriek followed by an extreme bustle and confusion on the other side of the room. The cause was soon explained. Excited with wine, and artfully drawn on by Bracy, General Gudgeon had told one of his "gentleman's stories" to Miss MacSalvo, on the strength of which outrageous anecdote that zealous advocate for establishing a Female Missionary Society for the Prevention of Polygamy amongst the Aborigines of the North-Eastern District of South-West Australia had seen fit to go off into a perfect tornado of the most alarming hysterics!

CHAPTER XL.

SHOWS, AMONGST OTHER MATTERS, HOW RICHARD FRERE PASSED
A RESTLESS NIGHT.

THE hysterical affection of the praiseworthy antipolygamist having taken place late in the evening, may be said to have broken up the party. Mrs. General Gudgeon, who, when the catastrophe occurred,

was more or less asleep over the same book of prints to which she had devoted herself on her first arrival, originated, as she witnessed the confusion, a faint idea—all this lady's ideas, and they were not many, were of a dim and hazy character, so that a good impression of her thoughts—if we may be allowed the term—was a rarity hardly to be met with)—that her better half was in some way connected with the matter; and knowing that dining out usually “produced an effect upon him” (as she delicately and indefinitely phrased it), she forthwith instituted an inquiry after her carriage, and that “vehicle for the transmission of heavy bodies” being reported in readiness, she issued marching orders, and as soon as the honourable and gallant officer could be got upon his legs, took him in tow, and in his company departed.

The Dackerels hastened to follow this example, the maternal Dackerel having come in for her share of the General's “good things,” and appearing much inclined to “trump” Miss MacSalvo's hysterics with a fainting fit; J. D. D., with a face even longer than usual, supported her retiring footsteps. He had been warming his chilly spirit in the sunshine of the widow's smiles, till, in the possibility of some day calling that delicate creature his own, the outline of a new and fascinating destiny had been traced upon the foolscap paper of his imagination; but the doom was still upon him, and in the calls of filial piety he recognised a fresh postponement even of this last forlorn hope. Frere had shaken hands with Rose, apologised for not being able to lunch with them the next day—a thing which nobody had asked him to do—and, having set the butler and both the tall footmen to look for his cotton umbrella, and put on consecutively two wrong greatcoats, was about to walk home, when Mr. James Rasper interfered; *he* would drive his friend home—anywhere—everywhere—so that he would but accompany him. He wanted to show him his cab; he wished to learn his opinion of his horse—in short, he would not be denied; and Frere, beginning to think his friendship a worse alternative than his animosity, was forced to consent, which he did thus—

“Well, yes, if you like. I shall get home sooner, that's one comfort; and I've got three hours' work to do before I can go to bed. Is this your trap? The brute won't kick, will he? Ugh! what an awkward thing to get into. I believe I've broken my shin. Go ahead! Mind you steer clear of the lamp-posts. I can't think why people ride when they've got legs to walk with.”

Bracy waited patiently to hand Miss MacSalvo downstairs, which he did with much gravity and decorum, lamenting the disgraceful conduct of General Gudgeon, of whom he remarked, with a portentous shake of the head, that “he greatly feared he was not a man of a sober or edifying frame of mind,” which observation was certainly true as far as the sobriety was concerned.

Whether Jemima of the sour countenance had, in arranging Frere's bed, imparted somewhat of the angularity of her own nature to the feathers, or whether the events of the evening had excited that part of his system in regard to the existence whereof he indulged in a very bigotry of scepticism, namely, his nerves, certain it is that when

(having read Hindostanee till daylight peeped in upon his studies) he went to bed he did *not* follow his usual system of dropping asleep almost as soon as he had laid his head upon his pillow; neither could he apply his ordinary remedy for insomnolency, for when he tried to concentrate his attention on some difficult sentence in his Hindostanee, or to solve mentally an abstruse mathematical problem, a figure in white muslin obscured the Asiatic characters or entangled itself inextricably with rectangular triangles, so that the wished-for Q. E. D. could never be arrived at. Frere had never thought Rose Arundel pretty till that night—one reason for which might have been that he had never thought about her appearance at all; but now, all of a sudden, the recollection of her animated face as, carried away by the impulse of the moment, she had begun to tell him how she admired his noble conduct, occurred to him, and all its good points flashed upon him and haunted and oppressed him. The smooth, broad forehead—he *had* observed that before, and decided it to be a good forehead in a practical point of view—*i.e.*, a capacious knowledge-box; but now he felt that it was something more, and the mysterious attribute of beauty forced itself upon his notice and flung its charm around him. Then her eyes—those deep, earnest, truthful eyes—seemed yet to gaze at him, with a bright expression of interest sparkling through their softness. He could not, try as he pleased, banish the recollection of those eyes; as he lay and thought they came across him, and bewitched him like a spell. And her mouth—what a world of eloquence was there even in its silence; there might be traced the same firmness and resolution which marked the haughty curl of Lewis's short upper lip; but the pride and sternness were wanting, and in their place a chastened, pensive expression seemed to afford a guarantee that the strength of character thus indicated could alone be aroused in a good cause; but the true expression of that mouth was to be discovered only when a smile, suggestive of every softer, brighter trait of woman's nature, revealed the little pearl-like teeth. All this seemed to have come upon Frere like a sudden inspiration; he could not banish it from his recollection, and the more he reflected upon it, the less he understood it. And so he tossed and tumbled about, restless alike in mind and body, till at last, just as the clock struck six, he fell into a doze. But sleep afforded him no refuge from his tormentress. Rose, changed and yet the same, haunted his dreams; but a halo appeared to surround her—she had acquired a character of sanctity in his eyes. Never again could he inadvertently address her as "sir," and he would as soon have thought of connecting the idea of a "good fellow" with one of Raphael's Madonnas as with Rose Arundel. At half-past seven Jemima—a very chronometer for punctuality—knocked at his door, and receiving no answer, *sans cérémonie* walked in, to see what might be the matter; and finding her master rather snoring than otherwise, invaded his slumbers by exclaiming in a shrill voice—

"It ain't of much use me getting out of my blessed bed with the rhumatiz in the small o' my back to bring your hot-water by half-past seven, if you lay there snoring like a hog, Master Richard,

and won't answer a body when they call you;" to which appeal she received the somewhat inconsequent reply—

"Well, suppose I wouldn't let him shoot me, there's nothing very fine in that, Rose."

"Listen to him," exclaimed Jemima, aghast; "lor' a mussy! I hope he ain't a wandering, or took to the drink. Master Richard, will ye please to wake and talk like a Christian, and not go frightening a body out of their wits," she continued in a tone of voice as of an agitated sea-mew.

"Eh, what? oh, is that you, Jemima? I was so sound asleep; go away and I'll get up directly," muttered Frere, becoming conscious of those usual colloquial antipodes, "his room and his company."

But Jemima had been flurried and rendered anxious on his account, first by his silence, next by his incoherent address, and now finding her alarm had been without foundation, her better feelings turned sour, and having her master at an advantage, seeing that he could not rise till she should please to convey herself away, she gave vent to her acidulated sentiments in the following harangue—

"Yes, it's all very well to say 'go away,' as if you was speaking to a dog, after frightening people out of their wits by talking gibberish about shooting and fine roses; but I see how it is, you're a taking to evil courses, a staying out here till one o'clock in the morning, for I heard ye a comin' in, lying awake with the rhumatiz in the small o' my back, drinking and smoking cigars, which spiles the teeth and hundermines the hintellects, and accounts for being non compo Mondays the next morning; but I've lived with you and yours thirty year and odd, and I ain't a-going to see you rack-and-ruining of your constitution without a-speaking up to tell you of it, for all your looking black at the woman that nursed you when yer was an hinocent babby, all onconscious of sich goings on."

"My good woman, don't talk such rubbish, but go away and let me get my things on," returned Frere in a species of apologetic growl.

"Rubbish indeed!" continued Jemima in a violent falsetto, her temper being thoroughly aroused by the contemptuous epithet applied to her unappreciated homily; "that's all the thanks one gets for one's good advice, is it? but I don't care. I've lived with you, man and boy, nigh half my life, which, like the grass of the field, is three score years and ten come Michaelmas twelvemonth, and I'm not a-going to see you take to evil courses without lifting up my voice as a deacon set on a hill to warn you against 'em, which is what your blessed mother would have done only too gladly if she wasn't an angel in the family vault, where we must all go when our time comes; smoking filthy cigars and stopping out till one o'clock in the morning, indeed!" and muttering these words over and over to herself, as a sort of *refrain*, Jemima hobbled out of the room with more stoutness and alacrity than could have been expected from her antiquated appearance. Relieved from the incubus of her presence, Frere rose and proceeded to dress himself; but the nightmare that had oppressed him, whether sleeping or waking, haunted him still.

In vain he tried to shave himself; the vision in white muslin came between his face and the looking-glass and occasioned him to cut his chin. At his frugal breakfast it was with him again, and strange to say, took away his appetite; it went out with him to his scientific institution, and weakened his perceptions, and absorbed his attention, and dulled his memory, till even the most positive resolved nebulae swam in a mist before him, and the mountains of the moon, which had lately developed a new crater, might have been the *bonâ fide* productions of that planet instead of merely her African godchildren, for aught that he could have stated to the contrary. He got through his morning's work somehow, and then the vision prompted him to call at Lady Lombard's, and gave him no peace till he started for the goodly mansion of that hospitable widow, which he did in such an unusually agitated frame of mind, that for the first time in the memory of man he forgot his cotton umbrella; he hurried wildly through the streets, overthrowing little children and reversing apple-women, not to mention an insane attempt to constitute himself a member of the "happy family," by dashing violently against the wires of their cage, which contains all kinds of strange animals except a Richard Frere, or a *Podiceps Cornutus*, till at last he reached the locality in which Lady Lombard's house was situated.

And here a new and unaccountable crotchet took possession of his brain. Frere, who since he could run alone and express his sentiments intelligibly in his native tongue had never known what bashfulness meant, was seized with a sudden attack of that uncomfortable sensation, the extinguisher of so many would-be shining lights of humanity, who but for that "flooring" quality would have published such books and made such speeches that the hair of society at large, upraised with wonder and admiration, must have stood on end through all time, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine." So violent was this attack of shyness that, after having hurried from his office as though life and death hung upon his speed, he could not make up his mind whether to pay the projected visit or not, and actually strolled up and down, passing and repassing the door some half-dozen times before he ventured to knock at it; nay, to such an extent had this mysterious "*timor panico*" seized upon him, that when the plush-clad "man mountain" appeared in answer to his summons he merely left his card, and inquiring meekly how the ladies were, posted off at, if anything, a more rapid pace than that at which he had walked on his way thither.

Then ere he had proceeded the length of a street came the reaction, under the influence of which he not unjustly stigmatised himself as an egregious fool, and but for very shame would fain have retraced his steps. He could not, however, make up any credible excuse for facing the noble footman a second time, so as the next best thing to seeing Rose, he found his way to Park Crescent and called upon Lewis, to whom he related how he felt so restless and fidgety that he was persuaded he must be about to develop a feverish cold, or some analogous abomination. Having engaged Lewis to accompany him on the following evening to a lecture at the Palæontological on "The

Relations of the Earlier Zoophytes," whoever they might be, he was about to depart, when, as he reached the hall, a carriage, with a splendid pair of greys, dashed up to the door, and a pretty little brunette with sparkling black eyes, a brilliant complexion, and a bonnet the colour of raspberry ice, descended, and passing Frere with a glance half saucy, half contemptuous, ran upstairs as if she were an *habitude* of the house. This was Emily, Countess Portici, Lord Bellefield's younger sister, who, having at nineteen run away with an Italian nobleman, for love of his black eyes and ivory complexion, had ere she was five-and-twenty grown heartily sick of them and of Italy, and discovered some good reason to quit that land of uncomfortable splendour to enjoy the gaieties of a London spring, leaving her picturesque husband to console himself as best he might during her absence. She possessed very high spirits without any vast amount of judgment to counterbalance them, and her present frame of mind was that of a school-girl rejoicing in a holiday, into which she was determined to cram as much pleasure, fun, and frolic as an unlimited capacity for enjoyment would enable her to undergo. On the strength of her position as a married woman, she constituted herself Annie's chaperon on all occasions when the vigilance of Minerva Livingstone could be eluded; and as that Gorgon of the nineteenth century was not so young as she had been, and found late hours tend to reduce her stamina and degrade the dignity of ill temper to the ignominious level of mere peevishness, she unwillingly allowed the Countess Portici to act as her substitute and escort Annie to such evening entertainments as from their nature threatened to invade the hours dedicated by Minerva to repose. There was much similarity of feature and of manner between the Countess and her brother Charles Leicester, only that Charley's languid drawl was in Emily replaced by a sparkling vivacity, which, together with a certain selfish good-nature that led her to promote the enjoyment of others on every occasion in which it did not come in contact with her own, was sufficient to render her a general favourite. Annie was no exception to this rule; and always delighted to escape from the petrifying influence of Minerva, eagerly seconded all her lively cousin's schemes for her amusement.

The object of the Countess's visit on the present occasion was to secure Annie for the following evening, when they were to dine together, and were afterwards to be escorted to the Opera by Lord Bellefield, where they were to hear a new soprano with a voice three notes higher than that of anybody else, which notes might by a mild and easy figure of speech be not inaptly termed bank-notes, seeing that by their exercise the fair cantatrice had realised the satisfactory sum of thirty thousand pounds.

The Countess's scheme happening to fit in very nicely with the views of the elders, as the General dined out, and Minerva was nursing a cold, which must have reduced the temperature of her blood to some frightful figure below zero, the project met with no more opposition than, from the constitution of Miss Livingstone's mind, was inevitable. And thus it came about that on the following day Emily called for Annie, and the two girls (for the matron was a very *girlish* specimen

of five-and-twenty) drove round the park together, and then retired to Emily's boudoir and "talked confidence" till it was time to dress. Annie's revelations did not go much more than skin-deep, and related chiefly to anxieties concerning papa and difficulties with Aunt Martha, who was "so tiresome about things, and never would let anybody love her," and then branched off to a retrospective sketch of the preliminary difficulties which had obstructed Charley Leicester's wedding, ending by a detailed account of the ceremony itself, and Annie's hopes and fears as to the ultimate result of the bridegroom's good resolutions.

Emily, on the contrary, plunged at once *in medias res*, and related how all last winter she had been rendered wretched by "Alessandro's" attentions to the Marchese Giulia di B—ani (she revealed the blank in an agitated whisper), and what all her particular friends had said to her on the subject, and how she had jointly and severally replied to them that the dignity of her sex supported her; whence, warming with her subject, she went on to state how she in her turn had supported this dignity by repulsing the advances of Captain Augustus (familiarly and affectionately reduced, for colloquial purposes, into Gus) Travers, who, having been her first love, and retired *vice* Alessandro Conte de Portici promoted to the rank of husband, considered that it was again his innings, and had diligently sought to become platonically her third love and disputed the post of *cavalier servente* with all and sundry, in spite of which constancy and devotion she had persevered in her repulsiveness until, between her cruelty and a reckless indifference to malaria, poor Gus was attacked with a brain fever, and then of course when he grew a little better she could not continue unkind to him, for she might have had his life to answer for, and that was a serious consideration; and so by degrees he took to coming to the Palazzo Portici constantly and went about to places with her, and somehow she got accustomed to him, and Alessandro did not seem to mind, and poor Gus always behaved very well, and only asked to be allowed the privilege of her friendship, and everybody did the same sort of thing—"It's their way over there, you know, Annie dear;" till at last Bellefield came, and he had never been able to endure Gus because he was so handsome, poor fellow, so Bellefield made a great fuss and said all sorts of shocking things, and set Alessandro at her; and worse than all, quarrelled with Gus and wanted to horsewhip him, and it almost came to a duel, only she wrote Gus a little note, imploring him not to fight, but to go away and forget her; and he had done the first directly, and she dared say he had done the second, for she'd never seen him since, which of course she was very glad of. And here she heaved a deep sigh and caressed a comic and unnatural transalpine poodle, which by reason of its flowing locks looked like an animated carriage mat, as though it had been a pet lamb, the sole prop of some heart-broken and dishevelled shepherdess, to which picture of pastoral pathos did Emily, Countess di Portici, then and there mentally assimilate herself.

And to all this history of loves, and hates, and platonic friendships, whatever they might be, simple innocent Annie listened with much interest and more perplexity. She had a vague notion that Emily had

behaved foolishly, if not wrongly; but she was very fond of her cousin, who, from the difference in their respective ages, had acquired a degree of ascendancy over her which their natural characters scarcely warranted. Then Annie's deep ignorance of foreign manners and customs threw a mist of uncertainty around the whole affair, beneath the shadow of which she was able to put the most charitable construction on Emily's conduct without "stultifying her moral sense" (to speak as a logician); still she felt called upon to give her cousin a little good advice in regard to striving entirely to forget, and scrupulously to avoid for the future, the too fascinating Gus, for which Emily kissed her and called her a dear, silly, little prude; then twining their arms round each other's taper waists, the girls descended to the dining-room, united for the time being, literally and figuratively, by the closest bonds of amity and affection. Standing rather in awe of her brother, Emily conducted herself during the meal with so much gravity and decorum that she quite threw a shade over Annie's usual light-heartedness, and by the time they reached their opera box a more sombre trio (not even excepting the soprano, the tenor, and the baritone, of whom the first two were prepared to be poisoned, and the third to stab himself on their marble tomb before the evening should be over) could not have been found beneath the roof of Her Majesty's theatre.

Between the acts of the opera a *divertissement* was introduced, in which a *danseuse*, who had acquired an Italian reputation, but who was as yet unknown in England, was to make her first appearance. Emily was conversing volubly about her various merits, when a fashionably-dressed young man with delicate features, a profusion of dark waving curls, and a pair of the most interesting little black moustachios imaginable, lounged into one of the stalls and began lazily to scrutinise the company through a richly-mounted opera-glass. He was undeniably handsome, but the expression of his face was disagreeable, and his whole demeanour *blasé* and puppyish in the extreme. As he entered, Annie perceived her cousin to give a violent start, and, as she met her glance, to colour slightly; then, evidently unwilling to attract her brother's notice, she made a successful effort to recover herself, and appeared completely absorbed in the terpsichorean prodigies of the new opera-dancer. Just at the conclusion of the *divertissement* some one knocked at the door of the box, and on Lord Bellefield's opening it, Annie heard a man's voice say, in a hurried manner, "Can your Lordship allow me two minutes' conversation? My business is of the utmost importance." Lord Bellefield replied in the affirmative and quitted the box, closing the door behind him. As he did so, Emily, laying her finger on her cousin's arm, said in a hurried whisper: "Annie, do you see that gentleman in the fourth row of stalls, the sixth from this end? That's Gus; isn't he handsome, poor fellow? Ah!" she continued, as the object of her scrutiny suddenly brought his opera-glass to bear upon their box, "he has made me out, and he does not know that Bellefield is here. Oh! I hope he won't think of coming up!"

As she spoke, Gus, having become aware of her presence, made an

almost imperceptible sign of recognition, and in the same quiet manner telegraphed an entreaty to be allowed to join her; upon which Emily frowned and shook her head by way of prohibition, favouring Gus afterwards with a pensive smile, to show that her refusal proceeded less from choice than from necessity. Almost as she did so Lord Bellefield returned, looking annoyed and anxious. "I am obliged to leave you for half-an-hour," he said, "but you will be perfectly safe here, and I shall return in plenty of time to escort you home. You may depend upon my coming to fetch you." And almost before he finished speaking he had quitted the box and was gone.

Confused and half-frightened at his sudden departure, Annie remained for a minute or two with her eyes fixed on the door through which he had as it were vanished; when she again glanced towards the stage the stall lately occupied by Augustus Travers was vacant.

CHAPTER XLI.

ANNIE GRANT FALLS INTO DIFFICULTIES.

LEWIS, according to agreement, accompanied Frere to the Palæontological, and added to the circle of his acquaintance those mysterious beings, the "Relations of the Earlier Zoophytes." When the lecture was over, Frere, who had an order to admit two into the House of Commons, took Lewis with him to hear the speaking. The debate proved interesting: the Premier addressed the House at length; a well-known satirist rose to reply to him, remarking on various points in the speech with much talent and more ill-nature, and the minister was again on his legs to answer his opponent, when Lewis, glancing at his watch, discovered to his annoyance that it was considerably past eleven; and aware that General Grant had a particular objection to his servants being kept up late, communicated this fact to his companion, and wished him good-night.

"What! can't you stay and hear ——'s answer?" was the reply, "and then I'd come away, too."

Lewis explained that the thing was impossible, and Frere continued—

"Well, what must be, must, I suppose; and as my hearing ——'s reply is another inevitable necessity, I must e'en say Good-night, so *Schlaffen sie wohl.*"

Lewis grasped his proffered hand, and leaving the gallery, started on his homeward route. As he approached Charing Cross his attention was attracted by the restlessness of a magnificent horse, which, in a well-appointed cab, was waiting at the door of one of the houses. As he slackened his pace for a moment to ascertain whether the efforts made by a diminutive cab-groom to restrain the plunging of the fiery animal would prove successful, the house door was flung open, and a

gentleman, apparently in headlong haste, sprang down the steps so recklessly that he missed his footing, and would have fallen had not Lewis caught him by the arm in time to prevent it. As the person he had thus assisted turned to thank him, the reflection of the gas-light fell upon his face, and Lewis recognised Lord Bellefield, though his features were characterised by a strange expression which Lewis had never observed in them before. Drawing back, he bowed coldly, and was about to pass on when Lord Bellefield exclaimed—

“Stay one moment, Mr. Arundel. I have been forced to leave the Opera-house suddenly: the Countess Portici and Miss Grant are in Lord Ashford’s box, and I have promised to return to see them home, but am quite unable to do so. You would oblige—that is, I am sure General Grant would wish you——”

“Will your lordship favour me with the loan of your pass-ticket?” interrupted Lewis shortly.

As Lord Bellefield complied with this request, Lewis remarked that his hand trembled to such a degree that he could scarcely grasp the ivory ticket.

“You will tell the Countess that it was impossible for me to come to them,” continued the young nobleman hurriedly; then passing his hand across his eyes, as if he were half bewildered, he sprang into the cab, and seizing the reins, drove off at a furious pace in the direction of Westminster Abbey.

Lewis gazed after him for a moment in surprise, then turning on his heel, walked rapidly to the end of the Haymarket, hoping to reach the theatre before the opera should be concluded. In this expectation he was however disappointed, for when he gained the Opera Colonnade he perceived, from the crush of carriages and the bustle and confusion which was going on, that the opera was over. Hastily pushing through the crowd, he endeavoured to find the box Lord Bellefield had indicated, but to one as little acquainted as was Lewis with the intricacies of the Opera-house this was no such easy matter; first, he ran up considerably too high; in his eagerness to retrieve this error he descended as much too low; and even when he had attained the proper level he more than once took a wrong turning. At length he caught a box-keeper, who, on learning his difficulties, volunteered to conduct him to the box he was in search of. Lo, and behold, when they reached the spot the door stood open, and the box was tenantless!

In order to explain how this awkward and embarrassing result had been brought about, we must beseech the reader’s patience while we resume the broken thread of our narrative where we relinquished it at the end of the last chapter.

Scarcely had Lord Bellefield quitted the box five minutes when the attendant opened the door and Augustus Travers made his appearance. He was very humble and courteous, and all he said to Emily with his tongue might have been printed in the “Times” the next morning without affording matter for the most arrant gossip to prate about; but the language spoken by his eloquent blue eyes was of a very different character. He told her vocally that he had been travelling

in the East since they had last parted; that he had been unwell, had felt restless and unsettled; that he had found it impossible to remain contentedly in any place, had become a citizen of the world, a wanderer over the face of the globe; that he had only returned to town during the last week, and had no notion she had left Italy—dear Italy!—and here his eyes said, “that country which your presence made a paradise to me,” just as plainly as if his tongue had spoken the words (in fact they said it more plainly, for his tongue appeared to consider it fashionable to speak English with a slight lisp, which occasionally rendered his meaning indistinct); “but when he saw her”—continued his tongue—“he could not resist coming up to her box to learn whether she had quite forgotten all her old friends;” and here his eyes resumed that his faith in her was so strong that nothing, neither absence nor aught else, could in the smallest degree shake it.

Then Emily replied that she was always delighted to see any old friend, but that she really was quite shocked to find him looking so ill; which observation she uttered with particular tenderness, because, not being aware that he had played French Hazard at a club in St. James's Street till five o'clock on the previous morning, she accounted for his pale looks by the romantic hypothesis that he was dying for love of her. And so they continued to converse in an undertone, apparently much to their mutual satisfaction, while Annie, having bowed coldly when she was introduced to the fascinating Augustus, of whose presence there she greatly disapproved, pretended altogether to ignore him, and to turn her attention solely to the opera. And time ran on, till, just as the baritone singer was approaching, with suicidal intentions, the (imitation) marble tomb supposed to contain the corpses of his tenor and soprano victims, but which really was tenanted by a live carpenter, who, in a paper cap and flannel jacket, was waiting till the fall of the curtain should enable him to carry away the entire mausoleum, Annie, looking at her watch, perceived that it was past eleven, and glancing towards Emily, reminded her in dumb show that Lord Bellefield might be momentarily expected. This intelligence Emily, in a low tone, communicated to her friend, who smiled, to show his white teeth, and replied that “Bellefield and he had met at Baden, and had become wonderful friends again;” despite which assurance Emily still urged his departure, and he still lingered on, till the opera came to an end before Lord Bellefield made his appearance. Being Saturday night, there was no ballet, and the house began to empty rapidly.

“What can possibly have become of your brother, Emily?” exclaimed Annie, who, disliking the whole situation most particularly, was fast lapsing into that uncomfortable state of mind familiarly termed “a fuss.”

“If you will allow me, I shall be delighted to see you to your carriage,” insinuated Gus.

“Thank you, but I am sure my brother will be here directly,” returned Emily; “he would be extremely annoyed to find that we had gone without waiting for him. Pray do not let us detain you.”

But of course Gus would not go; "he should be wretched unless he knew they were in safety; he saw they were anxious, he would ascertain whether Lord Bellefield had returned; there might perhaps be difficulty in getting up their carriage," and so he left the box, promising to return instantly.

"What *are* we to do, Emily, if Bellefield does not come?" exclaimed Annie, pressing her hands together much as the *prima donna* had done when, some quarter of an hour since, she had ejaculated at the very tip-top of her lofty voice, "*Addesso Morir!*"

"What are we to do, you silly child?" replied Emily, laughing, "why, walk downstairs, to be sure, and allow Gus to take care of us till we can find the carriage. Is not he handsome, poor fellow!"

Before Annie could urge her dislike to this scheme, Travers returned, bringing with him a tall, good-looking boy, embarrassed by a perpetual consciousness of his extreme youth and his first tail-coat.

"I can see nothing of Lord Bellefield," began Gus; "it is evident something must have occurred to prevent his return. Let me introduce my brother Alfred," he continued, addressing Emily; "he was a naughty little boy in pinafores when you saw him last—and now what will you do? every one is going or gone."

"Oh, wait a minute longer; I'm sure he will come," urged Annie.

"Really we cannot," returned Emily. "We shall get shut up in the opera-house all Sunday, if we don't take care."

"Which would be indeed dreadfully wicked—a most terrific climax of depravity," simpered Gus. "Seriously," he continued, "you must accept my arm, though I am sorry the alternative should be so very disagreeable to you." These latter words he spoke in such a tone that Emily alone could hear them, for which he obtained a reproachful, tender, and upbraiding glance, with a view to which reward he had probably uttered them.

"Come, Annie, we positively must go," exclaimed her cousin impatiently.

"Alfred, why don't you offer Miss Grant your arm?" chimed in Gus, drawing Emily's within his own. Thus urged, poor Annie, sorely against her will, accepted Alfred's trembling arm and quitted the box, Emily and Augustus Travers following. As they descended the stairs a slight confusion occurred: an Irish gentleman had lost his hat, and wanted to return to look for it, a measure against which a stout old lady, to whom he was acting as escort, vehemently protested, while an obsequious box-keeper was vainly endeavouring to understand the locality in which the embarrassed Hibernian imagined he had left the missing article. While Annie and her juvenile protector were manœuvring to get past this group, Augustus Travers paused, saying in a low tone to his companion, "Let them precede us; I *must* speak two words to you in private, and if I lose this opportunity I may never have another. Emily, if you value my peace of mind, I entreat you do not refuse."

A large party, composed chiefly of young men, was descending at the moment, so that Emily's reply was inaudible, but when, having got in some degree clear of the confusion, Annie looked back for her

chaperone, Travers and the Countess were nowhere to be seen. Horrified at this discovery, Annie stopped abruptly, exclaiming, "Oh, we have missed Mr. Travers and my cousin! We had better turn back."

The boy glanced quickly round, and as he perceived the truth of her assertion a meaning smile passed across his features. All traces of it had, however, vanished ere he replied, "They must have turned down the other staircase, but it will bring them out at the same place as this would have done; we shall meet them at the bottom." Then, as his companion still hesitated, he continued, "I can assure you it is so; we should only lose them if we were to return."

Half convinced by this argument, and completely frightened by the party of young men, who, talking and laughing, were rapidly following them, Annie suffered herself to be hurried on by her companion till she reached the foot of the staircase; here she paused and looked anxiously around for her cousin and Travers—they were nowhere to be seen. Annoyed, distressed, and frightened, she turned to her companion, exclaiming, "They are not here, you see. What *are* we to do?"

"Wait, I suppose," returned the boy, who seemed puzzled and vexed. "This is a nice trick of Master Gus's," he continued in a half soliloquy; "he ought at least to have given me a hint what to do."

Before Annie could inquire what he imagined his brother's intentions might be, a fresh incident diverted, and, from its disagreeable nature, soon wholly engrossed her attention. The crush-room, as it is called, where she was now standing, was occupied almost entirely by men, who, broken up into parties of four or five, were pacing up and down, waiting for their friends to join them, or standing in groups, canvassing the various merits and demerits of the different performers. To one or two of these coteries Annie soon became an object of especial notice.

"Do you see that girl?" whispered a pert youth with light curls and a turned-down collar. "Isn't she a regular stunner, eh?"

"Ya'as, dev'lish pwitty, ra-ally," drawled a moustachiod puppy, staring through an eyeglass at the object of his admiration. "Aw—I wonder who she possibly ca-an be. I actually don't know har."

"I suppose she's standing there to be looked at," returned the first speaker. "Her juvenile gallant can't get her along at any price, it seems."

"Ra'ally, it were almost worth while to relieve him of his charge," drawled moustachios. "He seems particularly incompetent to fill it, not—aw—equal to the situation—ha! ha!"

"Why don't you volunteer, Spooner, if you think so?" urged a third speaker.

"Na-o, I don't do that sort of thing—I'm—aw—quite a reformed character," was the reply; "but if you wa-ant a leader for such a forlorn hope—aw—here comes your man."

As he spoke, a tall, distinguished-looking individual, with much watch-chain and more whisker, who looked forty, but might be a year or two younger, lounged up to the group, and showing his teeth with

a repulsive smile, inquired, "What are you young reprobates grinning about, eh?"

"We were only saying it was a pity that young lady had not a more efficient protector, and advising Spooner to volunteer, Sir Gilbert," was the reply.

"Who are the individuals?" inquired the last comer, screwing a glass into the corner of his eye. A moment's inspection served to elucidate the mystery; and removing the glass with a contemptuous smile, he added, "The boy is little Alfred Travers, who has just left Eton; he's evidently waiting for his brother, who, I've a notion, has more strings than one to his bow to-night; as for the damsel, *noscitur a sociis*. We'll play the fascinating Gus a trick for once in his life. Come with me, Forester; I may want you to bully the boy." Then turning on his heel, he advanced towards Annie, and saluting her with a low bow, began—

"This is a most unexpected pleasure! I had no idea you were here to-night; where have you hidden yourself this age?" then perceiving that, confused by his address, and uncertain whether he might not be some acquaintance whose features she had failed to recognise, the young lady was completely at a loss how to reply, he continued, "I see that you have been cruel enough to forget me; while I, on the contrary, have carried your lovely image in my heart, and time has failed to efface even the shadow of a charm. But let me be of use to you. Have you a carriage here, or will you allow me to place mine at your disposal? The house is becoming deserted—let me escort you. Stand aside, young gentleman," and as he spoke he advanced towards her, offering his arm.

But Annie, having recovered from her first surprise, felt convinced that the person addressing her was a total stranger, and drawing back in alarm, she said to her companion in a hurried whisper—

"Indeed, I do not know that gentleman—there must be some mistake—pray let us get away."

Thus urged, the boy drew up his slight figure to its full height, and turning to the individual in question, said haughtily—

"You are mistaken, sir; I must trouble you to allow us to pass."

"It is you who mistake jest for earnest, my good boy," was the contemptuous reply; "the lady and I are old friends; she is merely trying to tease me by pretending to have forgotten me. This gentleman" (and he glanced at his companion) "will explain the matter to you." Then again offering his arm to Annie, he continued, "Really, if you persist in your silly joke we shall have the carriage drive off."

Confused by his pertinacity, Alfred Travers glanced at his trembling companion, and reading the truth in the terrified expression of her face, his boyish chivalry took fire, and anxious to vindicate his title to be considered a man, he exclaimed, angrily—

"Stand back, sir, and let us pass; do you mean to insult the lady?"

The person he addressed, Sir Gilbert Vivian, was a *roué* Baronet who, having been a man about town for the last sixteen years, and having long since lost all the good character he had ever possessed,

and acquired a reputation of a diametrically opposite tendency, was scarcely a person to stick at trifles, laughed as he replied—

“Do you hear that, Forester? This good youth accuses you of insulting the young lady—hadn't you better give him a lesson in civility?”

As he spoke he made a significant gesture, which the other responded to by exclaiming—

“Insult the lady! what do you mean, you young cub, eh?” and grasping him by the arm, he twisted him roughly round, thereby separating him from Annie.

“Take that, and find out,” was the thoroughly school-boy answer, as, bounding forward, the ex-Etonian administered to his antagonist a ringing box on the ear.

This, save that the blow was more skilfully applied and rather harder than he had calculated upon, was just the result Forester had anticipated. Seizing the struggling boy by the collar, he declared he would give him in custody for an assault, and, despite his resistance, dragged him from the spot in a pretended search after a policeman. Availing himself of the confusion, the Baronet placed himself by Annie's side, and bending over her, said—

“It's no use waiting for the fascinating Augustus, I can assure you; he has other game in view to-night, and can't come; so for once you must allow me the honour of acting as his deputy—'pon my word, you must,” and as he spoke he attempted to take her arm and draw it within his own.

Poor Annie! distressed, confused, and frightened, the desertion, or rather capture, of the boy, her only protector, had increased her alarm twenty-fold, and now the renewed persecution of the Baronet brought her fears to a climax, and attempting to withdraw her hand from his grasp, in a very agony of terror she exclaimed—

“Oh! where *is* Emily? will nobody help me?” and burst into a flood of tears.

At this moment a tall figure suddenly interposed between them, and the Baronet's wrist was seized with such a vice-like grasp that he uttered an exclamation of mingled rage and pain, and dropped the little hand of which he had unjustly possessed himself as though it had been a red-hot cinder; while Annie, uttering a cry of delight, sprang forward, and clasping the arm of the new-comer, clung to it as some drowning wretch clings to the plank which shields him from the rushing waters that threaten his destruction.

Lewis, for he it was (as every reader above the unsuspecting age of four and a half has of course ere this discovered for himself), understanding at a glance the outlines of the situation, and intuitively divining much of what Annie must have gone through, pitied and sympathised with her so deeply that the anger he would otherwise have felt against the man who had insulted her was completely conquered by the stronger feeling which absorbed him, and his only thought was how best to soothe and tranquillise the frightened girl who clung to him.

“Do not alarm yourself,” he said kindly; “you have nothing more

to fear. I will not leave you for a moment till you are again at home and in safety. Lean on my arm, you tremble so that you can scarcely walk ;” and half leading, half supporting her, he drew her away from the scene of her disasters, and passing through the crowd of loiterers whom the scuffle between Forester and Alfred Travers had attracted to the spot, conducted her towards the nearest exit.

So quietly and suddenly had all this taken place, that ere Sir Gilbert Vivian had left off rubbing his wrist, or thoroughly realised the sudden frustration of his scheme, the object of his insolent attentions was almost out of sight. Irritated at his failure, and urged on by the scarcely suppressed laughter of those who had witnessed his defeat, he muttered an oath, and turning on his heel, followed hastily in the track of Annie and her deliverer. Coming up with them just as they reached the entrance leading into the colonnade, he tapped Lewis smartly on the shoulder, saying angrily—

“A word with you, sir, if you please. I wish to ask what you mean by your impertinent interference. Who the d—l are you, I should like to know?”

A flush of anger passed across Lewis's brow, and he was about to make a reply which would scarcely have tended to bring the matter to an amicable conclusion, when an almost convulsive pressure of the arm on which Annie hung recalled his self-control, and drawing himself up with a stern dignity which bespoke an apt pupil in the school of General Grant, he fixed his piercing eyes upon the Baronet as he answered, “You have already, sir, acting probably under some *mistake*” (and he laid a strong emphasis upon the last word), “subjected this lady to an amount of fright and annoyance which should secure the forbearance of any one moving in the society of gentlemen. Should you wish to call and apologise to her father for your share in this unlucky adventure, I shall be happy to explain to you in his presence the part I have taken in the affair. There is my address,” and without waiting further parley Lewis handed him his card, and drawing Annie gently forward, passed on. As they reached the entrance, a gentleman coming hastily the other way, nearly ran against them. Looking up, Annie perceived it to be Augustus Travers, who, recognising her, exclaimed, “I have left the Countess Portici in the carriage, and was returning to seek for you, Miss Grant. She is much alarmed at having missed you.” The only reply Annie made to this speech was by a slight inclination of the head, and pressing hastily forward, she passed on. As Lewis assisted her into the carriage, she, for the first time, spoke. “You will come with us,” she said eagerly; “remember you have promised not to leave me.” Then catching sight of Augustus Travers, who had followed them, a new idea struck her, and she continued, “Tell that gentleman I am afraid his brother has become involved in some difficulty on my account; he had better go back and seek for him.” Lewis repeated her message and then sprang into the carriage, which instantly drove off, leaving the discomfited dandy to accomplish his mission as best he might.

CHAPTER XLII.

A TÊTE-À-TÊTE, AND A TRAGEDY.

A PARTY more silent than the trio occupying General Grant's carriage never drove from the door of Her Majesty's theatre. Annie, delighted to find herself once again in safety, leant back amidst cloaks and cushions to recover as best she might the effects of the terror she had undergone. Somewhat to her surprise and displeasure, Emily, without uttering a word by way either of explanation or condolence, also threw herself back among the cushions, and arranging a fold of her mantle so as to conceal her face, appeared unconscious of the presence of her companions. To this silent system they scrupulously adhered till they reached Conduit Street, when Emily exclaimed in a quick, eager tone of voice, "Where are they going? Tell him to drive to Berkeley Square directly."

Lewis, to whom this speech was addressed, let down the window and gave the coachman the requisite order, and in less than five minutes the carriage stopped at the house occupied for the season by the Countess Portici. The servant let down the steps, and Lewis springing out, assisted the Countess to alight; as she did so she turned her head, and saying hurriedly, "Annie, I shall see you to-morrow," entered the house, and the door closed after her. Lewis resumed his place, and the carriage drove away.

"I think she is very unkind not to have said she was sorry for having missed me, and I'll never go out with her again," observed Annie petulantly. "And Lord Bellefield, too," she continued—for she had by this time reached that stage of recovery when, tracing back her alarm to its first causes, it became a relief to her to pour forth her wrongs, and in Lewis she felt sure of a prudent and sympathising auditor—"it is all his fault for deserting us in such a shameful way."

"You are not perhaps aware that, meeting me accidentally, his lordship despatched me to you as his substitute," returned Lewis.

"Did he intend then to have come back himself, if you had been unable to act as his deputy?" inquired Annie quickly.

"He told me it was impossible for him to do so," was Lewis's reply.

"Then if he had not happened to meet you by mere chance, he would have left us to find our way to the carriage as best we could. How shameful! just imagine what would have become of me if you had not arrived when you did?—that dreadful man!—I believe I should have died of fright." She paused, then added, in her usual gentle, winning voice, "I must again plague you with my thanks, Mr. Arundel; you are fated always to render me services for which I am unable to make you any return; except by my sincere friendship," she continued timidly.

"And that is a reward for which a man might——" began Lewis passionately. He was going to add, "gladly die," but he checked himself abruptly, and if Annie could at that moment have seen his

face, she would have been scared at the expression of despair by which it was characterised, an expression changing instantly to a look of the sternest resolution, as he continued, in a calm, grave voice, "I mean that your uniform kindness and consideration have overpaid any trifling service I may have been fortunate enough to render you."

"Did Lord Bellefield give any reason for being unable to return to us?" inquired Annie after a pause. Lewis replied in the negative, and Annie resumed, "Papa will be waiting for us—he never goes to bed till I come home. You must tell him all you know of what has occurred, Mr. Arundel; and pray make him understand clearly how much my cousin is to blame in the matter."

"Of course, if General Grant questions me I must tell him exactly what I have done and why I did it," returned Lewis gravely; "but—may I indeed use the privilege of a friend, and venture for once to advise you?"

"Oh yes, pray do," rejoined Annie eagerly; "I shall be so much obliged to you. I dare say I am going to do something very foolish."

"From my acquaintance with your father's high and chivalrous character," continued Lewis, "I feel sure that the facts with which I must make him acquainted will incense him greatly against Lord Bellefield, and as the General is, both from temperament and education, a man of action, his resentment is almost certain to lead to some practical results. Now just at present you are naturally and justly angry with your cousin; but young ladies' anger is seldom of a very vindictive description, yours least of all so, and when, after frowning him into penitence, you have graciously forgiven him, will not a serious rupture with the General be a source of annoyance (to use no stronger word) both to you and to Lord Bellefield? All that I would recommend," continued Lewis, seeing that Annie bent down her head and made no reply, "would be, not what the lawyers term *suppressio veri*—I would not for the world have you conceal anything; but much depends upon the spirit in which a tale is told, and I am anxious to save you from the subsequent regret which yielding to a momentary impulse of anger may cost you."

"Tell me plainly what it is you think my father would do?" inquired Annie abruptly.

"I think—pardon me if I speak too freely—I think the General would resolve to break off the engagement which Mr. Leicester long since informed me existed between yourself and Lord Bellefield; and it was to save you the pain such a resolve might cost you that I ventured to offer you my advice."

"You are mistaken," replied his companion hurriedly; "such an arrangement as that to which you refer may have been, perhaps still is, contemplated; but the idea has always been distasteful to me, and anything which would preclude the possibility of further reference to it would be to me a subject of rejoicing rather than of regret. You may think it strange in me to speak thus openly to you; but I am sure my confidence is not misplaced, and—and I am most anxious my father should understand clearly the insult (for I consider it no less) my cousin has to-night offered me."

Whether the information thus communicated was a source of pain or pleasure to her auditor, we must leave the reader to conjecture for himself, as when Lewis next spoke his manner was calm and grave as ever.

"There is one possibility," he said, "of which you must not entirely lose sight: there may have been some urgent necessity for Lord Bellefield's presence elsewhere—some sufficient reason for his apparent neglect, which he will only have to mention in order alike to disarm your indignation and that of General Grant."

"Really, my cousin appears to have secured a most able advocate," returned Annie, with the slightest possible shade of annoyance perceptible in her tone. "I was scarcely prepared to find you so zealous in his cause."

Lewis's face grew dark as he replied in a low, earnest voice, "While I live, Lord Bellefield shall always meet with the strictest justice at my hands! Justice!" he continued bitterly, "it is a god-like principle, and sculptors have symbolised it well—the blinded brow, to show the stern singleness of heart; the scales, to weigh the merits of the case; and the keen sword, the agent of a sudden and full retribution."

He spoke in a tone of such deep and concentrated feeling, that Annie, as she listened to his words, trembled involuntarily. With the keenness of a woman's instinct she appreciated the intensity of the feeling and the power of the will that was, for the time, able to control it. For the time!—in that phrase lay the secret of her prescient terror.

Lewis was too much engrossed by the strength of his own emotions to perceive the alarm he had excited; nor was it till they reached the corner of Park Crescent that he again spoke—

"How did you contrive to become separated from the Countess Portici?" he inquired. "You were absolutely alone amongst those people—were you not?—when I came up."

Scarcely had Annie informed him of the circumstances which led to her desertion when the carriage stopped.

"The General wishes to see you before you retire for the night, Miss Grant," insinuated the aristocratic butler, as, leaning on Lewis's arm, Annie entered the paternal mansion.

"Where is my father?" she inquired hastily—"in the library?"

Receiving an affirmative answer, she continued, turning to Lewis: "You must come with me; remember your promise!—I by no means consider myself safe till this interview is over."

Lewis smiled assent; his unnatural stiffness of manner seemed to have disappeared like magic the moment their *tête-à-tête* was over, and Annie again restored to the protection of her own home.

The General appeared in high good humour. "You are late, you dissipated puss!" he said as Annie entered. "Ah! Mr. Arundel," he continued, "I did not know you had been of the party. What have you done with Emily and Bellefield, Annie?"

"Emily is safely at home," was the reply; "she would not come further than Berkeley Square. As to my cousin Bellefield, he must answer for himself, if he is not irrecoverably lost; he chose to leave us

to take care of ourselves. We have had an adventure, and I should have died of fright if Mr. Arundel had not come to my assistance like one of the good genii in the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments.' But I must go to bed, or Aunt Martha will be implacable; she always examines Lisette on oath as to the precise moment at which she finally leaves my room. Mr. Arundel will tell you the whole history much better than I can—so good-night!" and casting a glance, half arch, half imploring, but wholly irresistible, at Lewis, she glided out of the apartment, and was gone ere the General had sufficiently "come at" the meaning of her speech to attempt to detain her.

Fixing his eyes on Lewis with a look of sublime perplexity, which bordered closely on the ludicrous, he exclaimed, "Pray, what is the meaning of all this, Mr. Arundel? Can you explain to what my daughter alluded?"

Thus called upon, Lewis was forced to narrate the adventures of the evening, with the details of which the reader has been already made acquainted.

The General heard him attentively, though his brow grew dark as he proceeded. He listened in silence, however, till Lewis began to describe the scene in the crush-room at the Opera-house, when he became so much excited that he sprang from his seat and began pacing the apartment with impatient strides. At the mention of Sir Gilbert Vivian's impertinent behaviour he exclaimed—

"A scoundrel! I remember when he was broke upon parade for insoleness to his commanding officer. I hope you knocked him down, sir!"

"I felt strangely tempted to do so," replied Lewis, "but he had several of his friends with him, so that I should have been certain to get into a disagreeable squabble; and in that case what would have become of Miss Grant?"

"Very true, sir, very true," returned the General hastily; "next to courage, coolness in action is the greatest attribute in a soldier—that is to say, in a gentleman—and I honour your forbearance for such a cause. Shake hands, sir!" and suiting the action to the word, General Grant crossed the room, and seizing Lewis by the hand, shook it warmly.

At this unusual display of feeling Lewis's pale cheek flushed, and he continued his narration to the point when he handed Sir Gilbert Vivian his card. Here he paused, and continued in an embarrassed tone of voice: "I dare say he will take no notice of this—but if he should—of course I am aware that the affair must be left entirely in your hands, and that it is Lord Bellefield's privilege to—to defend—that is, to chastise any insult offered to Miss Grant; but as you have so kindly signified your approval of my conduct in the affair hitherto—if you could reward me by allowing me to go out with this scoundrel——?"

This was a request so thoroughly after the General's own heart, that, as he listened to it, his little, bright eyes danced and sparkled with satisfaction, which he had much difficulty not to express in words; but his moral obligations, as a disciplinarian and the father of

a family, came across him, and he replied: "Duelling is a practice alike subversive of military discipline, and contrary to the dictates of religion; it is one, therefore, against which I have always—that is, for many years past—felt obliged to set my face. Until Lord Bellefield shall have afforded me some perfectly satisfactory explanation of his extraordinary conduct, his intercourse with this household must entirely cease; a man who could thus neglect his trust is the last person to whom I should dream of committing the honour of—ahem!—my family. As to this Sir Gilbert Vivian, from what I have heard of him, he is beneath the notice of a gentleman—quite a contemptible character; the fact of his annoying my daughter proves this. If it were not so, I vow to Heaven I'd have the fellow out myself on Monday morning." And finishing with this consistent remark his tirade against duelling, the General resumed his peripatetic exercise, much to the detriment of the library carpet.

When Lewis had completed his recital, his auditor again "took the chair," and leaning his head on his hand, remained pondering the matter for some minutes in silence. At length he said, "Did Lord Bellefield give you any possible clue to the reason why he could not return to the Opera-house?"

"He said nothing, sir, to throw any light upon the matter; but when I accidentally met him, as I have already mentioned, he appeared much agitated, his features were unusually pale, and characterised by an expression—I should almost say of horror."

"Have you any knowledge of the house he was leaving? Why do you hesitate?"

"I will tell you frankly, General Grant," returned Lewis, drawing himself up and meeting the General's scrutinising glance with a clear, steadfast gaze. "For some time past Lord Bellefield and I have not been on good terms together. Since I have lived beneath your roof he is the only person who has treated me ungenerously, or caused me to feel the full bitterness of my dependent situation. Respect for you, and a sense of my own position, have prevented my resenting his lordship's conduct as under other circumstances I might have done, but enough has passed between us to prove that we regard each other with no very friendly feeling."

"I was not at all aware of this—you should have told me this sooner, Mr. Arundel. I allow no one to be treated discourteously in my house," interrupted the General hastily.

"I should not have mentioned the fact now, sir," replied Lewis calmly, "had I not been anxious to explain to you why it is in the highest degree repugnant to me to be forced by circumstances to appear as Lord Bellefield's accuser, and thus lay myself open to the suspicion of being actuated by malicious motives."

"No one who knew you would imagine that, sir," returned the General; "but the truth should always be spoken regardless of consequences, and you must yourself perceive how important it is that I should form a just estimate of Lord Bellefield's conduct in this affair."

Lewis paused a moment in reflection, and then replied, "The part

I have taken in this business was none of my own seeking, nor do I see that I am bound by any obligation of honour to withhold from you the only other fact of which I am aware in regard to the matter. I do happen to know the character of the house which Lord Bellefield was leaving, for as I walked down to the Palæontological Society this afternoon with my friend Richard Frere, he pointed it out to me as a gaming-house of some notoriety."

The expression of the General's face, when he became aware of this uncomfortable little fact, grew so stern, that a distressed artist, wishing to paint some Roman father sacrificing his son, would have given all the small change he might have happened to have about him at the time for one glimpse of that inflexible countenance. Suggestive, however, of evil as was this circumstance, the whole affair appeared wrapped in such a veil of mystery that neither General Grant nor Lewis could, as they that night lay awake revolving the matter in their anxious minds, arrive at any satisfactory hypothesis by which to account for Lord Bellefield's extraordinary behaviour. The following paragraph, which appeared in several of the Sunday papers, and was recopied in the "Morning Post" of Monday, was the first thing that tended to enlighten them; it was headed

"APPALLING SUICIDE.

"As our columns were going to press we received intelligence of one of the most awful catastrophes which it has ever been our melancholy duty to record; we refer to the untimely decease of Captain Mellerton, of the —th foot, who perished by his own hand in a notorious gambling-house not far from Charing Cross. As far as we have been able to ascertain the facts of the case, the unfortunate young gentleman, who was adjutant of the —th, lost a considerable sum of money (it is said £12,000) to Lord B—f—d, a nobleman of sporting notoriety, at the first Newmarket meeting. Being unable to meet so large a call upon his finances, he was induced in an evil hour to speculate with some of the regimental money committed to his charge, intending to replace it by the sale of an estate in Yorkshire; and having thus satisfied the demands of his noble creditor, he was on Saturday last unexpectedly called upon to send in his regimental accounts. In this extremity we have heard it rumoured that he was induced to apply to Lord B—f—d, as the only person on whom he had the slightest claim; but if we have not been misinformed, the appeal was vain, and urged to desperation by this failure of his last hope, the unfortunate young man repaired to the gaming-house in which the rash act was committed, played deeply, and when fortune again declared against him, drew a loaded pistol from his breast, and before the bystanders were aware of his design, terminated his existence by blowing out his brains. Captain Mellerton was the eldest son of the Honourable H. Mellerton, of Harrowby Park, Beds., and was shortly to be married to Miss A— D—, daughter of Sir C— D—, the wedding-day being fixed immediately after the commencement of the recess."

CHAPTER XLIII.

WHEREIN FAUST "SETS UP" FOR A GENTLEMAN, AND TAKES
A COURSE OF SERIOUS READING.

WHEN General Grant had perused the "Morning Post," containing the paragraph with which the last chapter concluded, he left the remainder of his breakfast untasted, and hastening to the library, wrote the following letter:—

"MY LORD,—On learning from my daughter the uncourteous, I had almost written ungentlemanly, manner in which you neglected her safety on Saturday evening, I was naturally much incensed. A paragraph referring to you in the 'Post' of this morning affords a sufficient clue to the cause of your absence from the Opera-house, but unfortunately does so by casting upon you an imputation which (unless you can explain the affair to my entire satisfaction, which I confess appears to me improbable) must necessarily break off all intercourse between us. I am aware that your conduct may not have exceeded the limits which the world terms honourable, but I do not regulate my opinions by the world's standard, and should consider that I was indeed neglecting my duty as a father were I to entrust my daughter's happiness to a gamester whose success has involved the ruin and self-murder of a fellow-creature. These may sound harsh terms, but unless you can disprove that they are true ones, I for the last time sign myself, yours faithfully,

"ARCHIBALD GRANT."

Having relieved his mind by penning the above epistle, he despatched a mounted groom to convey it to its destination, and having seen him depart, shut himself up, in solitary dignity, to await an answer. In less time than could have been imagined the groom returned bearing the following missive:—

"Lord Bellefield presents his compliments to General Grant, and having perused his strangely offensive letter, begs to decline affording any explanation whatsoever of the conduct of which General Grant sees fit to disapprove. Lord Bellefield agrees in thinking that under these circumstances all intercourse between himself and General Grant's family had better cease."

While the General sat in his library pondering over this agreeable epistle with a rueful countenance, to which anger, vexation, and outraged dignity imparted a singularly undesirable expression, an eager and exciting conversation was being carried on in a pretty little apartment opening into a miniature conservatory, dedicated to the use of Annie Grant. Emily had arrived, all her own natural, fascinating, impulsive, silly little self again, and had pooh-poohed any attempt at coolness on Annie's part by throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her a very unnecessary number of times, under the plea of her

being "a dear, ill-used thing that *must* be petted." And having thus at one and the same time expiated her offences and relieved her feelings, she danced across the room, bolted the door, drew a heavy damask curtain over it, and exclaiming, "Now we're snug," danced back again, and flinging herself into an easy-chair, began—

"Oh, my dear Annie! I am so miserable, so utterly wretched, I must go back to Italy; I've written to Alessandro to come and fetch me directly. I shall never be happy again—at least not till I've quite forgotten it all—and that will be never." And here came out a little lace parody of a pocket-handkerchief, which, although by no means a desirable article wherewith to face a violent cold in the head, or at all calculated to withstand so much as an average sneeze, yet sufficed to dry the ghost of the tear which Emily's deep wretchedness drew from her.

"My dear Emily, what *is* the matter?" returned Annie, alarmed by a thousand vague fears, though, not having seen *the* paragraph, she was as yet unconscious of the darkest cloud that obscured the family horizon.

"Oh, my love, I suppose I ought not to tell you anything about it, but I must, for I've no one else to confide in. That wretch Gus!—would you believe it? he actually wanted me to leave poor dear Alessandro, and to run away with him;" and then with many ejaculations, and much flourishing of the homœopathic sized handkerchief, she went on to relate how, when she became separated from Annie at the Opera-house, "which was all that creature Gus's fault, and done on purpose," she was certain, the "creature" had availed himself of the opportunity he had thus secured to urge his undying attachment to her, which affection, despite its inherent principle of vitality, he declared would assuredly bring him to an early grave in the event of her obduracy continuing; but Emily, though positively a flirt, and negatively rather a goose than otherwise, was not unprincipled, and so when she had overcome her first impulse of surprise and mortification, all the virtuous wife arose within her, and she gave Gus to understand, by dint of sundry short, sharp, and decisive plain-spoken unpleasances, that he had made a false move and ruined his game. Thence lapsing abruptly into a fit of sulky dignity, she ordered him, with the voice and gestures of a tragedy queen, to lead her to her carriage, finally despatching the foiled "*Lionne*" hunter to remedy one of his ill deeds by finding Annie, on which mission he departed in a state of mind the reverse of seraphic. Having concluded this historical episode, *la Contessa* proceeded to append thereunto certain annotations and reflections, in the course of which she contrived to fix much blame on society in general, and on Gus and Alessandro in particular, but none whatsoever on her own flirting manner and inordinate love of attention, which self-deluding analysis was by no means an original feature in the case, but rather an unconscious imitation of the proceedings of many a deeper thinker than poor little Emily.

The conference between the girls was still at its height when a summons for Annie from her father interrupted the proceedings; whereupon Emily, declaring that neither her health nor spirits were

then capable of undergoing the pain *forte et dure* of an interview with Aunt Martha, drove home again, to fortify her principles and console her breaking heart with a volume of George Sand's last novel. The General was in a great state of virtuous indignation. Lord Bellefield's note had been as gunpowder sprinkled over the smouldering embers of his wrath, and when Annie arrived they (or, to translate the metaphor *slang-icè*, he) "flared up" to an immense extent. He told her of all the enormities which the newspapers attributed to her cousin, and signified his belief that the case had been rather understated than otherwise; he informed her of Lewis's *rencontre* with the delinquent at the door of a gaming-house; he adduced the note which he had just received as a proof that its writer must be lost to all better feeling—utterly wanting in a proper respect for age and position; and, in short, he said a great many severe and unwise things, after the fashion of angry men in general, for which he was afterwards very sorry, finding such speeches easier to say than to unsay—which result is also by no means uncommon in similar cases.

Having relieved his feelings by this explosion, he proceeded to the more serious business of the interview by informing her that the necessary consequence of these uncomfortable revelations must be the dissolution of all ties, present or prospective, between herself and Lord Bellefield, which autocratic act he performed with outward austerity and inward trepidation, as he fully expected Annie to receive the harsh decree with a violent burst of tears, and, man-like, there was nothing he dreaded so much—he would rather have faced a charge of cavalry any day. But to his surprise Annie sustained the information with a degree of stoical self-control that was perfectly marvellous. She neither wept, sighed, nor attempted the hysteric line; she only said gravely, "It's all very sad and shocking; but of course, dear papa, I am ready to agree to whatever you think best." The General rubbed his hands—there was a daughter for you! Not a word of opposition—to hear was to obey; it actually restored him to good humour. He talked to her kindly and sensibly for a quarter of an hour, and then went out and purchased for her a valuable diamond bracelet, which was his idea of rewarding self-sacrifice in woman. And so did Annie, involuntarily and unconsciously, gain high praise and honour for submitting with resignation to a decree which afforded her unmitigated satisfaction. As she left the library she encountered poor Walter, who appeared in unusually high spirits. Next to Lewis, Annie held the foremost place in Walter's affections, from the unvarying patience and kindness with which she treated him. Moreover, having failed to inspire him with the degree of respect not unmingled with awe with which he was accustomed to regard his tutor, he looked upon her in the light of a companion and an equal, to whom it might be safe to confide certain mischievous performances in which, as his spirits acquired more elasticity, and his mental powers began to develop, he saw fit from time to time to indulge. With some such intention did he now approach her, whispering as he drew near, "I want you, Annie; I want you to come with me and see Faust dressed like a gentleman."

"See what, you silly boy?" returned Annie, laughing.

"Come with me and you shall see," was the rhythmical and oracular response; and seizing her by the hand, he dragged her off in the direction of the sitting-room appropriated to his own use and that of his tutor.

"Is Mr. Arundel there?" inquired Annie, pausing when she discovered their destination.

"No, he's not at home; there's no other gentleman there except Mr. Faust," was the reply; and thus reassured, Annie complied with the boy's whim, and allowed him to carry her off unopposed. Now, since we have had any especial intercourse with that worthy dog, Faust's education had progressed rapidly as well as Walter's. Lewis, partly from want of occupation during the many weary hours his attendance on Walter necessitated, partly because by so doing he was enabled to excite and interest the feeble intellect of his poor charge, had availed himself of the unusual power of control he had acquired over the dog to teach him sundry tricks somewhat more difficult to perform than the ordinary routine of canine accomplishments; for instance, having perfected him in sitting on his hind legs in the attitude popularly supposed to represent the act of begging, he went on to teach him to sit thus perched up in a corner for a space of time gradually increasing, as by practice the animal's muscles acquired more rigidity, until at length it was no uncommon feat for him to remain in this attitude for an hour at literally a "sitting." Moreover, if a light book or pamphlet were placed on his forepaws, he would support it, and remain gazing on the open page before him with a solemn gravity of countenance, indicating, apparently, the deepest interest in the work he seemed to be perusing. Of the results of this educational course Walter had on the present occasion availed himself; and accordingly, Annie, on her introduction to the study, found the excellent dog seated on his hind legs in a corner, with an extempore mantle formed of a red scarf drooping gracefully from his shoulders, and an old cap of Walter's on his head. Thus attired, he appeared to be conning, with an expression of puzzled diligence, a tract against profane swearing by Mrs. Hannah More, presented to Walter by Miss Livingstone on the occasion of his inadvertently making use in her presence of the scandalous expression, "Bless my heart!" Annie, duly impressed by this spectacle, laughed even more than Walter had hoped for, and told Faust that he was much the best dog in the world, in which assertion she was not, as we think, guilty of any great exaggeration. And Faust, taking the compliment to himself only when the occurrence of his name rendered the allusion unmistakably personal, slobbered affectionately with his great comic mouth, and winked with his foolish, loving eyes, and made abortive attempts to wag his ridiculous friendly tail, which was crumpled up un-wag-ably in the corner, and in the plenitude of his excellence sat more erect than ever, and studied his profane swearing still more diligently.

As soon as Walter's delight at Annie's amusement had in some degree subsided, he turned to her, saying—

"But, Annie, you have not found out why I told you Faust looked like a gentleman."

"Oh! because he sits there reading his book with such an air of dignified composure, I suppose," was the reply.

"No; I'd a better reason than that," returned Walter, with a look of unusual sagacity.

"Well, then, you must tell me what it was, for I can't guess," observed Annie good-naturedly.

"Look again, and find out," rejoined Walter.

Thus urged, Annie examined the dog more attentively than she had done before, and discovered that round his neck was slung the identical gold watch and chain which, at her suggestion, Charles Leicester and his wife had given to Lewis.

"Why, you've hung Mr. Arundel's watch round Faust's neck! Oh, Walter, how foolish of you; he might have thrown it down and broken it!" exclaimed Annie, aghast at her discovery.

"Yes, that's it," returned Walter, chuckling with delight at the success of his puerile attempt at a trick. "All gentlemen wear gold watches, you know, and so does Mr. Faust."

"You ought not to have put it on him; I'm sure Mr. Arundel will be very angry," resumed Annie; and kneeling down by the dog, she began untwisting the chain from his neck. "Sit still, Faust; be quiet, sir," she continued, as Faust, in his affection, attempted to take an unfair advantage of the situation to lick her hands and face, in which act of impertinence Walter sedulously encouraged him; still Annie persevered, and at length succeeded in disengaging the chain and rescuing the watch from its dangerous position. "There," she exclaimed, "I have remedied the effects of your mischief, Master Walter; but I should never have been able to accomplish it if Faust had not been the best behaved, dearest old dog in the world;" and with an impulse of girlish playfulness she threw her arms round the animal and pressed his rough head against her shoulder, her soft auburn ringlets falling like a shower of gold upon his shaggy coat.

At this moment, Lewis, who had been to talk over his Saturday evening's adventures with Frere (or, at least, such portion of them as he chose to reveal, for on some subjects he was strangely reserved, even with Frere), returned, and finding the door ajar, entered noiselessly, and stood transfixed by the sight of the *tableau vivant* we have endeavoured to describe. He thought that he had never beheld anything so lovely in his life before, nor was he far wrong. The time that had elapsed since we first introduced Annie Grant to the reader had altered only to improve her beauty; her figure had gained a certain roundness of outline, and her face acquired a depth of expression, which had been the only finishing touches wanting to complete one of those rare specimens of loveliness on which we gaze with a speculative wonder as to why so much beauty should be, as it were, wasted on this world of change, and sin, and sorrow, and not reserved for that "Petter Land,"

"Where all lovely things and fair
Pass not away."

Whether ideas at all analogous to these presented themselves to

the mind of Lewis, we are unable to say; certain it is, however, that (his artist eye attracted by the picture before him) he stood gazing as one entranced, while his colour went and came, and his broad chest heaved with the intensity of his emotion. How long affairs might have remained in this position it is impossible to decide, had not Faust, becoming aware of his master's presence by some mysterious canine instinct, made an unceremonious attempt to free himself from Annie's caresses; and that young lady, raising her eyes, encountered those of Lewis fixed upon her with an expression which changed in an instant from ardent admiration to one of grave courtesy as he found that he was observed. Annie's manner, as she rose and came forward, afforded but little clue whether or not she had noticed this change, and though her colour appeared somewhat heightened, no want of self-possession was discernible as she said, holding up the watch—

"See what I have been rescuing from the mischievous devices of Master Walter! He had actually hung my cousin Charles' present to you round Faust's neck in order to make him look like a gentleman, as he declared. Walter, come and answer for your misdeeds; I intend Mr. Arundel to be very angry with you—where are you, sir?" and as she spoke she looked round for her companion, but whether really alarmed at the possibility of being reproved for his mischief, or whether actuated by some reasonless caprice of his half-developed intellect, Walter was nowhere to be found; so Lewis, having thanked Annie for her care of his watch, politely held open the door for her to depart. But when kidnapped by Walter, Annie had been carrying an armful of books, and Lewis, becoming aware of this fact, could do no less than offer to take them up to the drawing-room for her. Having accomplished this feat, he was about to retire, when it occurred to him that he was bound in common civility to inquire whether she had sustained any ill effects from her alarm.

"Oh, no," replied Annie; "thanks to your kindness and consideration, I am literally *quitte pour la peur*."

"I suppose," she added hesitatingly, "you have ere this learned the sad cause of Lord Bellefield's absence on Saturday night?" and on Lewis replying in the affirmative, she continued, "And do you believe all that the newspapers insinuate? Can my cousin have really behaved so very wickedly?"

"I called on my friend Richard Frere this morning," returned Lewis, "and I hear from him that the main facts of the case are matters of notoriety; for instance, racing men are well aware that Lord Bellefield won a large sum of money from this unfortunate young man; nor would your cousin attempt to deny that it is so. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the fashionable London world to hazard an opinion on the subject; but Frere, who knows everybody, says the story has gained universal credence; and though by no means disposed to judge human nature severely, believes in it himself."

"It is very, very shocking," murmured Annie; "and I had hoped it could not be true, but papa is much incensed, and believes it fully;

and I fancy you do also, although, having such just cause to dislike my cousin, you are too generous to blame him."

"Indeed, you are mistaken," returned Lewis kindly; for her manner confirmed him in an impression which had arisen in his mind that the distaste she had expressed to the engagement with Lord Bellefield would vanish as her anger at his neglect cooled. "Indeed, I do not think so; on the contrary, I have a strong conviction that the affair has been misrepresented and exaggerated, and that your cousin will be able to clear himself, not only to your satisfaction, but to that of General Grant also."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Annie impetuously; and then, ere the words were well spoken, she continued, "No, I do not mean that. How wicked of me to say so! but, oh! it is such joy to feel that I am free—free as air!" Then observing that Lewis's eyes were fixed upon her with an inquiring glance, though his lips framed no sound, she added with a bright blush, "Yes, you were a true prophet, Mr. Arundel," and turning abruptly, she quitted the room.

And Lewis! Did he rejoice that the man he hated was thus crossed in his dearest wishes—thus held up to public obloquy? Strange as many will deem it, he did not. On the contrary—except on Annie's account—he was annoyed at the turn events had taken. In the first place, although the facts were so strong that he could not reasonably discredit the reports that were in circulation, he felt a sort of instinctive belief that Lord Bellefield was not guilty of all the evil laid to his charge. He recalled the expression of his face as he had seen it on the night of the suicide; it had not been that of a man hardened in crime, who had left the victim of his betting schemes unaided in his extremity to seek refuge from dishonour in the madness of self-destruction, but rather that of a being of mixed good and evil startled by some frightful reality of life into a condition of temporary remorse. If Lewis could have realised his exact wishes at this moment, he would have desired to clear Lord Bellefield's character by his own unassisted efforts, and as a reward, to have called him out the next morning and fought with small swords (pistols would have decided the matter too quickly to satisfy him) till one or both should have furnished subjects for the undertaker. Then his thoughts reverted to Annie—she was free, and rejoiced in her freedom, therefore she was to be won. Watch his features as the idea strikes him: first a flush of joy, crimsoning brow and cheek, fading to the pale hue of despair; then the clenched hand and compressed lips, that tell of the strong will battling with, ay, and conquering—for the will is as yet the stronger—the germs of a consuming passion. Brave young heart, tasting for the first time the full bitterness of life, angels might have wept to view thy gallant striving!

The aphorism embodying the statement that a storm is usually followed by a calm, although by no means original, is not on that account the less true; nor in tracing the course of events in the household of General Grant shall we discover an exception to this rule in the "Law of Storms." Immediately after the incident we

have related, Lord Bellefield (probably wishing to escape the disagreeable notoriety likely to be obtained by his share in the catastrophe) escorted his sister to Italy, without making any attempt to deprecate the anger of General Grant; and although the Marquis of Ashford, who greatly desired that the proposed matrimonial alliance should take place (hoping that marriage might wean his son from various expensive pursuits, of the nature whereof the reader may have gleaned some faint idea from the previous course of this narrative), made sundry attempts to effect a reconciliation, the General remained implacable. From his new position, as occasional secretary to her father, Lewis was thrown into constant intercourse with Annie, while, from the deservedly high opinion General Grant had formed of him, he was treated more as a friend than a dependant. Before Mrs. Arundel and Rose left London, Annie obtained her father's permission to invite the latter to spend a few days with them. Rose placed the invitation in Lewis's hand before showing it even to Mrs. Arundel. She divined that her brother would feel strongly on the subject, and determined to be guided by his wishes. He read Annie's note in silence: it was like herself—simple, frank, and warm-hearted; it was accompanied by a few lines from the General—kind (for him) and courteous in the extreme. "Miss Arundel would confer an obligation on his daughter by allowing her the opportunity of becoming acquainted with," etc., etc. The General had heard of Rose's literary reputation, and looked upon her as a second Madame de Staël. A woman who had written a book appeared to his simplicity a thing as wonderful as, in these latter days, when, to speak poetically, the sun of literature is obscured by the leafy greenness of the softer sex, we are accustomed to regard a woman who has never done so. Lewis read the two notes; there was not a shadow of patronage from beginning to end at which the most rampant pride could take offence—the invitation was unexceptionable; and then a crowd of conflicting ideas rushed upon him, and he paced the apartment for once in a state of the most complete indecision. This was not a mood of mind which could ever continue long with Lewis, and pausing abruptly, he said, "I really do not see how you can well refuse, after such a very kind note from—from the General."

"I shall be delighted to accept it, dear Lewis, since you wish it as well as myself; I long to know more of that sweet Annie."

"You will be disappointed if you expect to find Miss Grant unusually clever," returned Lewis moodily. "She has good natural abilities, but nothing more, neither has she been accustomed to live amongst intellectual people; she is by no means your equal in point of talent."

Rose looked surprised at this depreciatory speech; she considered Annie so fascinating that she did not imagine it in man's nature to criticise her unfavourably, and that Lewis, of all people, should do so was very incomprehensible. She only replied, however, "Miss Grant is much more accomplished than I am, at all events; she sketches like an artist, plays with great taste and execution, and sings most sweetly. I do not think it by any means an advantage to a

woman to be unusually clever: it tends to force her out of her proper sphere, and to urge her to a degree of publicity repugnant to all the better instincts of her nature."

"I quite agree with you," rejoined Lewis cordially. "A woman should have a quick, vigorous intellect, to enable her to perceive and appreciate the good, the true, and the beautiful, but nothing beyond. With a single exception, dear Rose, I consider literary women complete anomalies, things to wonder at and to pity; depend upon it, few women who devote their lives to literature are really happy."

As Lewis ceased speaking Rose sat for some moments pondering the truth of the opinions which he, in common with many of the best and wisest of his sex, held on this subject. At length she said, "I agree, and yet I differ with you. Surely a fine mind is one of the noblest gifts God can bestow upon His creature, because," she added reverently, "the higher the intellect the nearer it must approach to His own perfect wisdom; therefore talent ought to be a boon to woman as well as to man; but is it not in the application of that talent that the mischief lies? If the consciousness of mental superiority unfits a woman for the performance of her natural duties, instead of enabling her to fulfil them more thoroughly, the fault rests not in the gift, which is in itself a privilege, but in the misapplication of it by the person on whom it is bestowed. Retirement is a woman's natural position, and anything which leads her to forsake it tends to unsex and deteriorate her. I do not say that it must necessarily do so; if, for instance, some pious motive, such as a desire to assist her family, actuates her, she often appears to be protected from the dangers which surround the path which she has chosen, but that these dangers are great and many it is vain to deny."

"My opinion is," rejoined Lewis, "that amongst either men or women those only should write books who, from some cause or other, are so thoroughly imbued with their subject that utterance becomes as it were a necessity; then, and then only, do they produce anything great and good. The strongest argument I know against women writing is that they never appear to exceed pleasing mediocrity. You have no female Shakespeare or Milton—even Byron and Scott are unapproached by the bravest of your literary Amazons. Certainly women should not write;" and having uttered this opinion much as if he would have liked to alter the "should" into "shall," and to be made autocrat of England till he had purged the land from blue-stockings, Lewis took his hat and departed, leaving that "talented authoress," his sister, to chew the cud of his encouraging observations as best she might.

The practical result of this conversation was that Rose spent a week in Park Crescent, and thus the occurrences thereof fell out. Miss Livingstone first catechised, then patronised the young tutor's sister. The General also tried a pompously condescending system, but Rose's sweetness subdued the old soldier; and ere the week had passed he became devoted to her, and in his stately fashion loved her only a little less than his own daughter. And Annie—she first began by being afraid of her new acquaintance because she was an authoress;

then she discovered that she was not so alarming, after all; next it occurred to her that she was very sensible; afterwards that she was very affectionate, which went a great way with Annie; and finally, that she was quite perfect, and exactly *the* friend she had been all her life pining for. From the moment she discovered this, which was once upon a time when Rose, carried away by the heat of congenial conversation, began to talk about her brother, she delighted to lay bare her pure, girlish heart to her new-found friend. And what does the reader suppose it contained? Any very mysterious secret, any dire and soul-harrowing episode, as became the heart of a heroine? Alas, for poor, degenerate Annie! there were no such interesting contents in her warm little bosom, only much simplicity, sundry good resolutions containing the germs of future self-discipline, great natural amiability, a ready appreciation of all that was excellent in art or nature, and an open and unbounded admiration of, and respect for, the character of Lewis; so open indeed that Rose thankfully acknowledged to her secret soul that one alarming possibility which had lately occurred to and haunted her—viz., that Annie and Lewis were falling in love with each other—could have no foundation in fact. The only drawback to Rose's pleasure in her visit was, strange to say, the behaviour of her brother. His manner when alone with her—and the delicate tact of Annie Grant afforded them many opportunities for a *tête-à-tête*—was wayward and fitful in the extreme. Sometimes, but very seldom, he appeared low and out of spirits; at others he was cold and sarcastic, or even perverse and unjust; and though these fits were invariably followed by expressions of the most affectionate regard towards Rose herself, yet the idea with which they impressed her was that his mind was ill at ease, and that for some reason which he studiously concealed, he was unhappy. The week passed away like a dream, and Annie, as she parted from her new friend, felt as if some being of a superior order, endowed with power to make and to keep her good, were leaving her again to fight single-handed with the trials and temptations of life.

Frere had been despatched by his scientific superiors to inspect certain organic remains which had come to light during the formation of a railroad cutting in the north of Ireland; which remains, assuming to be the vertebræ and shin bone of an utter impossibility (the comparative-anatomical sketch, which Frere designed on the *ex pede Herculem* principle, represented the lamented deceased as a species of winged hippopotamus, with a bird's head, a crocodile's tail, and something resembling an inverted umbrella round its camelopard-like neck, forming a whole more picturesque than probable), excited the deepest interest in the world of science, which lasted till, unluckily, one of the workmen, striking his pick-axe against a partially imbedded bone, found that the Rumpaddyostodon (for so had Frere's *chef* already named it) was composed of Irish oak.

Ere Frere returned from this expedition Mrs. Arundel and Rose had quitted London, a fact which annoyed that gentleman more than he could reasonably account for. Having, however, recovered from his strange fit of shyness, he wrote Rose a long account of his adven-

tures, winding up by originating a pressing invitation to himself to spend a fortnight with them during the vacation, which invitation he not only accepted most graciously, but with the utmost benevolence volunteered to prolong to three weeks, if he could possibly manage it.

Lewis, shortly after the departure of his mother and sister, received what Annie termed "marching orders"—viz., an intimation that on a certain day and hour he and his pupil were to hold themselves in readiness to start for Broadhurst, it being one of the General's pet idiosyncrasies to manage his family movements *saltatim*, by jerks, as it were, which disagreeable habit he had acquired during his campaigning days, when the exigencies of military service necessitated such abrupt proceedings. The consequence of this particular exercise of discipline was that Lewis received the following note on the evening before their departure:—

"DEAR SIR,—Learning this morning, accidentally, that you are about to leave town to-morrow, and wishing much to see you on a matter of some importance before you do so, shall I be putting you to any great inconvenience if I ask you to do me the favour of breakfasting with me to-morrow? Name your own hour, from six o'clock downwards. My boy is waiting, or more properly (you know his mendacious propensities) *lying* in wait for your answer. N.B.—I am aware of the utter vileness of that pun, but my ink is so confoundedly thick that really I could not make a better one.

"Yours faithfully,
"T. BRACY."

CHAPTER XLIV.

LEWIS PRACTICALLY TESTS THE ASSERTION THAT VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD, AND OBTAINS AN UNSATISFACTORY RESULT.

"THIS is kind of you, Mr. Arundel," exclaimed Bracy, shaking him heartily by the hand, when, in reply to his friend's invitation, Lewis made his appearance at his chambers by eight o'clock on the following morning; "I like a man who will come to you at a minute's notice. Now, as I know your time's short, we'll go to work at once, and talk as we eat. Bring the eggs and rolls, Orphy."

"Please, sir, they ain't none of 'em come," responded the individual thus addressed, who was no less a personage than the tiger "for falsehood famed."

"I knew he'd say that," observed Bracy aside, with a look of exultation, "I knew he'd say so, because I saw the man bring them five minutes ago; sharp boy! he never loses an opportunity of lying. Perhaps they may have arrived while you've been up here," he continued blandly; "go and see, Orphy."

"What do you call your tiger?" inquired Lewis as the imp disappeared.

"Why, his real name is Dick Timmins," returned Bracy; "I have taken the trouble to ascertain that fact beyond a doubt—of course I should not have believed it merely upon his authority—but I call him Orphy, which is a convenient abbreviation of Orpheus, because, like that meritorious mythical musician, he is at all times and seasons perfectly inseparable from a *lyre*! 'a poor pun,' sir, 'but mine own.'"

"It must surely be inconvenient and troublesome to be obliged perpetually to guard against some deception or other, to be in continual doubt as to what has or what has not taken place in your household," remarked Lewis.

"Not at all, my dear Arundel, there's the beauty of it," returned Bracy. "Others doubt and are perplexed, but I am never at a loss for a moment; I know all his most intricate involutions of lying, and can track him through a course of falsehood as a greyhound follows a hare: that boy could not deceive me unless he were suddenly to take to telling the truth; but there's not the least fear of that, his principles are too well established. Ah! *inter alia*, here he comes—do you see the pun? pre-suppose an Irish brogue, and accent the penultimate instead of the first syllable in the second word, and it's not such a bad one after all."

When, to use the popular lyric style, the "false one had departed," and the gentlemen were again left *tête-à-tête*, Lewis, reminding his companion that his time was short, hinted that it would not be amiss if he were at once to acquaint him with the business to which he had referred in his note.

"Ah! yes, to be sure," replied Bracy; "it was a letter I had from Frere yesterday which put the thing into my head. Let us see, what does he say?" And pulling a letter from his pocket, he ran his eye down it, reading and soliloquising somewhat after the following fashion: "Hum! ha! 'never take shares in an Irish railway'—thank ye, I never mean to—'the natives in these parts are not Cannibals, at which no one at all particular in his eating would wonder, after seeing the state of filth'—well, I won't read that, it will spoil our breakfast—'the organic remains are coming out splendidly; I feel little doubt they must have belonged to some antediluvian monster yet unknown to science.' Ah! the fossil remains of a pre-Adamite Irish bull, probably; and that's another, by Jove, for there would have been nobody to make it at that time of day: there's a P.S. about it, though—Ah! here it is—'only fancy, my organic remains prove to be vegetable, not animal; nothing more or less than a new species of Irish Oaks.' A new species of Irish *Hoax*, rather; I wonder how he came to miss the pun—some men do throw away their opportunities sadly; but I'm wasting your time—now then—in regard to what you tell me about the Bellefield affair, I can do nothing, not being on the spot; your best plan will be to communicate with Lewis Arundel—he is thoroughly *au fait* as to the whole matter; tell him everything, and act according to his advice. You may safely do so. I always thought his lordship a great scoundrel' (rather strong language!), 'but in this

case he appears more to be pitied than blamed; I like fair-play all the world over, and would give even the devil his due.' There," continued Bracy, folding up the letter, "that's what Richard Frere says, and I, knowing his advice to be good, am prepared to act upon it."

"It may be good," returned Lewis in a tone of annoyance, "but as far as I am concerned it is particularly enigmatical. There are many reasons why it is undesirable, I may say impossible, for me to interfere with Lord Bellefield's affairs."

"Still, if you are the man I take you to be," replied Bracy seriously, "you would not wish any one to labour under an unjust imputation, from which a word of truth can set him free. But it's no use beating about the bush; hear what I have to say, and then you can act or remain neuter, as you please. Of course you read the newspaper account of that sad business about poor Mellerton?"

Lewis replied in the affirmative, and Bracy continued, "Except in one or two points, the statement was substantially correct, but these happen to be rather important ones. In the first place, I should tell you that Mellerton was an intimate friend of my own. We were great cronies at Eton, and never lost sight of each other afterwards. I first heard of this betting affair from an officer of high rank, who holds an appointment by which he is necessarily a good deal behind the scenes at the War Office. Somehow it reached his ears that Mellerton had been betting heavily and met with severe losses, and knowing that I had some influence with him, he wished me to give him a friendly hint, which I accordingly did. Mellerton took it very well, poor fellow! and thanked me for my advice, which was his invariable custom, though I can't say he usually acted upon it. He confessed that he had lost more money than was convenient, and told me he had been forced to borrow, but the amount of his losses he studiously concealed. On the morning of the day of his death the same person sent for me again, and told me he was afraid Mellerton had been behaving very madly, and in the strictest confidence informed me that it was determined upon to examine into his accounts, and that if, as he feared, they would not bear the light, his character would be blasted for life, adding that I was at liberty to warn him of this, and give him an opportunity, if possible, of replacing the money. Owing to a chapter of accidents, as ill luck would have it, I was unable to meet with Mellerton till late in the evening, when I found him in a state of distraction, having just received officially the information I had sought to forestall. Seeing how much I knew already, he told me everything. I will not recapitulate the miserable details, but the newspapers did not overstate the truth. Well, as a forlorn hope, I suggested the appeal to Lord Bellefield's generosity, and after much persuasion he agreed to let me make the trial. I sprang into a hansom cab, and drove like the wind to Ashford House. Bellefield was dining with his sister; I followed him to Berkeley Square, and then to the Opera-house, where I lost not a minute in explaining my business. Well, sir, instead of rejecting the appeal, as has been reported, Lord Bellefield appeared greatly distressed at the intelligence—jumped into his cab, taking me with him, and as we drove down to poor Mellerton's

lodgings, expressed his readiness to do whatever I thought best—adding that he had £10,000 at his banker's, which was quite at Mellerton's service till he could sell his Yorkshire estate. The rest of the tale you know. The poor fellow, thinking, from my prolonged absence, that my attempt had failed, and unable to bear the disgrace of exposure, placed a loaded pistol in his pocket, repaired to a gaming-table, betted to the full amount of his defalcation, lost, and blew his brains out. We got there just as the surgeon they had sent for declared life was extinct; and you never saw a man so cut up as Bellefield was about it. He accused himself of being a murderer, and in fact seemed to feel the thing nearly as much as I did myself. As soon as he had a little recovered he volunteered to drive to Knightsbridge, to break the thing to poor Fred Mellerton's brother, while I did the same by his mother and sisters; and a nice scene I had of it—I thought the old lady would have died on the spot. But now, to come to the point, I hear that old Grant, believing all the newspaper lies, has quarrelled with his intended son-in-law and broken off the engagement; and that Lord Bellefield, too proud to make any explanations, has allowed him to continue in his mistake. Is this so?"

"I have no reason to believe your information incorrect," was the cautious reply.

"In that case, don't you think it is due to Lord Bellefield to acquaint General Grant with the truth?"

Lewis paused for a minute or two in thought ere he replied, "Certainly; it would be most unjust to withhold it."

"Well, I'm very glad you agree with me," returned Bracy, rubbing his hands with the air of a man who has escaped some disagreeable duty. "Then I may depend upon you to set the matter right?"

"Upon me!" rejoined Lewis in surprise.

"Yes, to be sure," was the reply; "that's what Frere expects. You see, it's rather a delicate affair for a man to interfere in, particularly one who is a complete stranger. I don't believe I ever set eyes on Governor Grant in my life. Now you, living in the house, can find a hundred opportunities. There is a good deal in selecting the *mollia tempora fandi* with men as well as with women."

"Then I am to understand that you have related these facts to me for the express purpose of my communicating them to General Grant?"

"Yes, to be sure. Do you think I should have put you to the inconvenience of coming here this morning merely for the sake of having a gossip?"

"And suppose I were to refuse to make this communication?" continued Lewis.

"Such a supposition never occurred to me," replied Bracy in amazement; "but if you were to do such an unexpected thing, matters must take their own course. In telling you, I've done all that I consider I am in any way called upon to do; if you, for any reason, deem it unadvisable to enlighten General Grant, there the thing must rest. Frere tells me to be guided by your advice, and so I shall; as I have just said, I leave it entirely to you."

"I understand you perfectly," rejoined Lewis, and as he spoke a contemptuous smile curled his lip; "still, justice requires that the General should not be kept in ignorance, and although there are many reasons why it is painful and objectionable to me to enlighten him, yet there are others which prevent my refusing; and now, Mr. Bracy, as my time is short, you will excuse my being obliged to leave you."

"Oh! certainly," returned Bracy, as his visitor rose to depart;

" 'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.'

Liberty Hall this, sir! *chacun à son goût*, 'everybody has the gout,' as the little girl at the boarding-school construed it. Then you'll make Governor Grant comprehend that in this particular instance Bellefield behaved like a brick? Disagreeable business to be obliged to interfere in, but, as Frere says, you're just the man to do it; *good morning*;" and uttering these words with the greatest *embressement*, he shook Lewis's hand warmly and suffered him to depart. As the door closed on his retreating figure Bracy threw himself back in an easy-chair.

"There's something in the wind that I'm not awake to," he muttered in soliloquy; "I don't comprehend that good youth at all. There must be private feeling mixed up in it; something in the love and murder line, I suspect. How savage he looked when he undertook the job—rather he than I, though: Bellefield's as likely to call a man out, as to say Thank ye, for interfering; but, as Frere says, Arundel's just the man to carry the thing through. He's a plucky young fellow and deucedly good-looking, but he certainly does not appreciate wit—ahem—that is, puns—properly;" and with this reflection Bracy took pen and paper and sate him down to indite an essay on moral courage and the responsibility of man, wherewith to fill up a vacant corner of Blunt's Magazine.

And Lewis—what a task had he undertaken! He who would have made any sacrifice to gratify Annie's lightest wish must now bring the first cloud over the sunshine of her young life; he must be the means of reconciling her father and Lord Bellefield; he must, by his own act, give the woman he loved to the man he hated. The woman he loved!—had then the fear that had lain cold and heavy at his heart, that had come between him and—resignation, assumed a definite shape? did he at length own that he, the poor tutor, the paid dependent, loved the rich man's daughter? Oh! Lewis, where was thy pride—where that Hell-angel beautiful in evil, which hath haunted thee even from thy childhood upwards like a second self? Had Rose's tears prevailed and thy pride deserted thee? Would that it had been so; but no, he had not yet learned that hardest lesson for the young and manly-hearted, self-distrust; his bosom-sin clave to him, and striving single-handed, how should he subdue it!

Lewis was not one of those who deceive themselves long on any point; and his emotions after the scene at the Opera-house, the amount of self-control he was obliged to exert to restrain any outbreak of feeling in the *tête-à-tête* drive with Annie, had revealed the

truth to him, and ere he slept that night he knew that now indeed was the sum of his wretchedness complete; for he loved, for the first time, one fitted to call forth all the depth and earnestness of his passionate nature, and he loved without hope. Pressing his hands to his burning brow, he sat down calmly to think. Calmly; yes, the treacherous repose of the smouldering volcano were an apt illustration of such a forced calmness. Renunciation and self-conquest! this then was his portion for the time to come. Self-conquest! Pride caught at the word; an enemy strong as the strength of will which should subdue it. Reason cried, "Flee from temptation;" but pride whispered, "The task is worthy of you; accomplish it." And resolution aided pride, and the iron will came into play, and the contest was begun. And now the reader can understand why Lewis's interview with Bracy would scarcely tend to raise his spirits, or render his general frame of mind more satisfactory.

Punctual to the moment the carriage made its appearance, drawn by four posters; and the General and the two ladies ensconced themselves in the interior, while, the day being lovely, Lewis and his pupil took possession of the rumble. About two miles from Broadhurst was a steep hill; on reaching this point Annie and her father, Lewis and Walter alighted, with the intention of walking up; but before half the distance was accomplished the General pleaded guilty to a very decided twinge of gout, and unwilling to provoke a second, re-entered the carriage, the others continuing their pedestrian exertions without him.

Annie, delighted to regain the freedom of the country, was in high spirits. "Why do people stay in London at this time of year?" she exclaimed. "This lovely sky, and the trees, and the birds, and the sunshine, are worth all the operas and pictures and balls and every sight or amusement London can afford; those things excite one for an hour or two, but this makes me perfectly happy."

Lewis glanced at her for a moment, sighed involuntarily, and then rousing himself, uttered some commonplace civility, which so clearly proved that he was forcing himself to make conversation from the subject of which his thoughts were far away, that Annie, struck by his manner, paused and fixed her large eyes earnestly upon him. At length she said—

"I am sure you are ill or unhappy, Mr. Arundel. I am now too well aware how utterly unable I am to compensate for the loss of such a friend and counsellor as dear Rose (oh! how I envy you that sister!), but if you would sometimes tell me when you are annoyed or out of spirits, instead of wrapping yourself in that cold, proud mantle of reserve, I think even such poor sympathy as mine might make you happier."

Lewis glanced round. Walter, actuated by some caprice of his wayward intellect, had run on before—they were virtually alone. Now it had occurred to Lewis that, as Annie had allowed him to perceive her dislike to the idea of a union with Lord Bellefield, he should entirely lose her good opinion were she to learn that it was through his representations that a reconciliation with her father had

been brought about; and although this would have been a very desirable result for many reasons, and have materially assisted him in his design of conquering his unhappy attachment, yet he by no means appeared to approve of the notion, but on the contrary had, with his usual fearlessness, determined to seize the first opportunity of explaining to her why reason and justice obliged him to act in opposition to her wishes. And now that the opportunity had arrived, the considerate kindness of her address disarmed him, and in the unwillingness to inflict pain on her he half abandoned his purpose; but here his strength of will—that fearful agent for good or for evil—came into action and settled the matter. It was right; it must be done. Accordingly he thanked her for her kindness, made her a pretty speech as to valuing her sympathy, which expressed somewhere about one-fifteenth of what he really felt on the subject—said, which was quite true, that nothing had for a long time afforded him greater pleasure than the friendship which had sprung up between her and Rose—then, speaking in a low, calm voice, he continued, “I have been both grieved and annoyed this morning; you guessed rightly when you thought so. Will you forgive me, and still regard me as your friend, when I tell you that circumstances force me to act in direct opposition to your wishes, and to do that of which I fear you will highly disapprove?”

Annie looked at him with an expression of surprise and alarm, which gave way to a bright, trustful smile as she replied, “Nothing can lead me to doubt your friendship, Mr. Arundel; I have had proofs of its sincerity too convincing for me ever to do so. If you are obliged to say or do anything which may pain me, I am sure you feel it to be duty which compels you. And now tell me what you refer to.”

Poor Lewis! the smile and the speech went straight to his heart, like the stroke of a poniard: pride, resolution, and all the other false gods he relied on disappeared before it; and for the moment love was lord of all. But self-control had become so habitual to him, that the most acute observer could not have detected the slightest indication of the inward struggle; and ere he spoke his will had resumed its mastery, and his purpose held good. He gave her, in as few words as possible, an account of his interview with Bracy; and told her that it was his intention immediately to acquaint General Grant with the facts that had thus come to his knowledge.

She heard him in silence; and when he had finished she said in a low voice, which thrilled with suppressed emotion, “My father will forgive him, and all will be as if this thing had never happened.”

They walked on side by side, but neither spoke. At length Lewis said abruptly, “I have told you this man and I were not on friendly terms; I now tell you that he has heaped insult after insult upon me till I HATE him. Yes, you may start, and your gentle woman’s nature may condemn me, but it is so: I hate him.” He spoke calmly, but it only rendered his words more terrible, for it told not merely of the angry impulse of the moment, but of the deep conviction of a lifetime; and Annie shuddered as she listened. Regardless of her emotion,

Lewis continued, "Circumstances have in this instance forced me to appear as Lord Bellefield's successful accuser. To some minds this petty triumph might have afforded satisfaction; to me it has been a source of unmixed regret; the retribution I seek is not of such a nature. Fate has now placed in my hands the means of vindicating his character; and every principle of honour, nay of common justice, binds me to do so. We may not do evil that good may come. I should forfeit my self-respect for ever were I to conceal this knowledge from your father. You would not have me do so, I am certain?"

Lewis paused for a reply; there was silence for a moment, and then in a low, broken voice Annie said, "No! you *must* tell him. But I am very, very unhappy!" And uttering the last words with a convulsive sob, she covered her face with her hands, and turned away to conceal the tears she could no longer repress.

CHAPTER XLV.

ANNIE GRANT TAKES TO STUDYING GERMAN, AND MEETS WITH AN ALARMING ADVENTURE.

WHETHER the sight of Annie's tears would have produced any change in Lewis's determination, had their *tête-à-tête* continued uninterrupted, is a question in regard to which psychologists may arrive at any conclusion which pleases them; for Walter having literally, or figuratively, caught his butterfly, rejoined his companions almost immediately, and under cover of his puerile volubility Annie contrived to dry her eyes and outwardly regain her composure.

In the course of the following morning Lewis found an opportunity of making the important communication. General Grant heard him with grave attention, and when he had concluded, observed—

"This alters the whole aspect of the affair. Any man may commit a fault, but if he sees his error, and is willing by every means at his command to atone for it, it behoves all generous-minded persons to forgive him. I perceive that I have, in this instance, acted hastily, and owe Lord Bellefield reparation. I shall write to him immediately, and have to thank you, Mr. Arundel, for affording me this information, which may give me an opportunity of effecting a reconciliation with one on whom I had long since decided to bestow my daughter's hand. Your disinterested, I may say magnanimous conduct in this matter, entitles you to my fullest confidence. I shall make it an express stipulation that for the future Lord Bellefield shall evince all due consideration towards you."

And this speech, and the haunting memory of Annie's tears, were Lewis's reward for doing his duty.

The result of this communication was that the General wrote a long letter to Lord Bellefield, using many words to express his meaning, which might have been advantageously compressed into half

the number; however, it satisfied its composer, who considered it a miracle of diplomacy and a model of style. Lord Bellefield's answer was cold and haughty; his pride had been wounded, and his was not a mind frankly to forgive an injury of that nature; still he did not reject the General's overtures. He was going to travel in Greece (he wrote), but on his return to England he would see General Grant and refute the calumnies which had been spread to his disadvantage: he was aware that he had enemies who might be glad to avail themselves of any opportunity to vilify his character, but he trusted to the General's sense of justice to discourage such attempts. And the contents of this letter were communicated to Annie by her father, together with a rebuke for having so easily believed reports to her cousin's disadvantage, which lecture somewhat failed in its effect from the unlucky fact that, in this particular instance, the lecturer's practice happened to have been diametrically opposed to his preaching; but the rebuke led to one evil result—viz., it crushed in the bud a half-formed project which Annie had conceived of acquainting her father with her growing disinclination to a union with her cousin, and of imploring him to take no step towards a renewal of the engagement. Moral courage (save when her feelings were very strongly excited) was not one of Annie's attributes, and as the evil she feared was not a proximate one, she trusted to chance to postpone it still further, if not to avert it altogether. Thus, being naturally of a light-hearted, joyous temperament, she ere long recovered her usual gaiety, and an occasional sigh, or a quarter of an hour's unwonted abstraction, alone attested her recollection of this dark speck on the horizon of her future life.

The return to Broadhurst appeared to produce a soothing effect upon Lewis also—it gave him an opportunity calmly to review his position; and a new idea struck him, generalising from which he sketched out a system different from that which he had hitherto pursued in regard to Annie Grant. True, he could never hope to call her his—love was forbidden him—but friendship, warm, ardent friendship—love elevated, spiritualised, purified from the slightest admixture of passion,—this he might enjoy safely; it only required a strong effort of will, a determined, uniform exercise of self-control. To be enslaved by hopeless love was mere weakness; to crush the sentiment entirely was Quixotic and uncalled for; but to control and regulate it, to fix limits which it should not exceed, and thus to convert a curse into a blessing, this was an effort worthy of a reasonable being, and this he would accomplish. In order to carry out this design he determined no longer to avoid Annie as he had done; it was cowardly to fly thus from temptation; besides, it was evidently useless to do so; imagination supplied the deficiency, and the evil was but increased. No, he would face the danger and subdue it. Thus, too, he might be of use to her, for with all his admiration of her character he read it aright, and saw that there were weak points which required the aid of principle to strengthen them; that her pursuits were frivolous, her mind uncultivated, and her existence practically aimless, because her views of life were confused and indistinct, and her standard of excellence a

visionary one. All this he saw, and seeing, felt that he could remedy. And while he pondered on these things Annie recalled an old wish to study German, and asked her father's permission to be allowed to do so, if Mr. Arundel could find time to give her lessons; whereupon the General, having a great respect for any language of which he was personally ignorant, preferred her request to Lewis, and that young gentleman was graciously pleased to accede thereunto. Miss Livingstone of course played duenna, and but for one circumstance would have performed her character with a degree of cold-blooded virulence worthy of the most fractious tigress that ever mangled "lovers tender and true." This fortunate circumstance was that the lessons, being usually taken by way of dessert after an early dinner, invariably sent Minerva to sleep. In vain did she bring out her "poor basket," in which receptacle lay hid certain harsh underclothing for infant paupers; in vain did she attempt sewing the seams of Proustes-like pinafores, which, solving the problem of the minimum of brown holland capable of containing a living child, were destined to compress the sturdy bodies of village urchins; the "*colo calathisve Minervæ*" were unable to resist the attacks of the god Somnus, and ere Annie had stretched her pretty little mouth by the utterance of a dozen double-bodied substantives, the lynx-eyes were closed in sleep, and for all practical purposes Miss Livingstone forfeited every right to the first half of her patronymic.

Reader, if you are of the gender which uncourteous grammarians are pleased to designate the worthier, tell me,—in strict confidence, of course,—did you ever read German with a pair of bright eyes turning from the crabbed Teutonic characters to look appealingly into your own optics, while two coral lips, formed for pleasanter purposes than growling German gutturals, complain of some enigmatical sentence which has *not* got a right meaning to it, the said eyes and lips being the outward symbols of a warm heart and quick intelligence, ready to discern and feel the grandeur of Schiller, the Shakespeare of the Fatherland, or thrill to the trumpet blasts of young Körner's warrior spirit, or trace the more subtle thinkings of Goethe, that anatomist of the soul of man? Tell me, did you ever read with so desirable a fellow-student? If you have done so, and can honestly say you did not think such schooling delightful, the sooner you close this book the better, for depend upon it there is little sympathy between us. Lewis at all events had no cause to be dissatisfied with his pupil, who was equally docile and intelligent, and in a marvellously short space of time was able to read and translate with tolerable fluency; while the few German sentences in which her instructor from time to time saw fit to address her appeared less like heathen Greek to her at each repetition. As soon as she had sufficiently mastered the difficulties of those aggravating parts of speech, the compound separable verbs, and acquired moderate control over other equally necessary and vicious parts of the grammar, they commenced translating that most poetical of allegories, La Motte Fouqué's "Undine"; and Annie, as they read, took it all at first *au pied de la lettre*, and imagined, with a degree of shuddering horror, which, as it was *only* a tale, was

rather pleasant than otherwise, all the supernatural uncomfórtables Huldbrand underwent in the Enchanted Forest, and admired all the generous impulses of the heroine's singular uncle-and-water, Kühleborn, who, however, she considered would have been better adapted for family purposes, if he had been rather more of a man and less of a cataract. Then Undine herself, the capricious, fascinating, tricky sprite—the thoughtful, loving, feeling woman—how Annie sympathised with and adored her! For Huldbrand she felt a species of contemptuous pity, but Bertalda, oh! she was sure no woman was ever so heartless, so utterly and wickedly selfish. And then when Lewis unfolded to her his view of the Allegory (every one is sure to form a particular theory of his own as to the meaning of "Undine," and to think he only has discovered the author's intention), and Annie learned that the tale shadowed forth the mighty truths which throng the passage to eternity, and symbolising the struggle between good and evil, showed how Principalities and Powers wage throughout all time an undying warfare—the breast of man their battlefield—her pulses quickened and her cheek flushed; for she felt for the first time the solemn realities of existence, and saw dimly how a single life might be a link between the Ages, and a portion, however insignificant, of the mighty whole. What wonder then if part of the reverence, the awe, chastened by a deep, solemn joy, with which she recognised the workings of Infinite power, and Infinite love, cast their spell around him who had first awakened these perceptions within her?—what wonder if unconsciously comparing him with those around her, she grew to believe him a being of another and a higher nature, and so to hang on his slightest word or look, to dread his frown, and deem his smile sufficient compensation for hours of un wonted study?

The German lessons seemed to agree particularly well with Lewis also; for his eye grew brighter and his step more free, the extreme paleness of his complexion changed to a manly brown, a slight tinge of colour imparted a look of health to his cheek, and—unromantic as it may appear—his appetite increased alarmingly. Would the reader learn the secret of this improvement? It is soon told. Living in the present, blinding himself to the truth, he was happy! His system, he told himself, had succeeded—his theory had been tested, and proved a true one—resolution had conquered, and the insanity of love had cooled down to the reasonableness of a delightful friendship.

Lewis was excessively pleased with himself at this result. At length, then, he had attained that complete and perfect degree of self-control he had so long endeavoured to acquire; his feelings were reduced to a due submission to his will; and henceforward his happiness was in his own hands. And thus basking in this gleam of sunshine, he shut his eyes to all beyond, and dreamed that he possessed an elixir to dissipate every cloud, and that henceforward storms would disappear from the horizon of his destiny and become mere myths, existing only in memory. And these were some of the earliest results of the German lessons.

About this time a small but unpleasant adventure occurred to poor

Annie which occasioned her a severe fright, and rendered her nervous and uncomfortable for many days afterwards. She had been on an expedition to the cottage of a poor neighbour who was suffering from illness; and as the sick woman lived beyond a walk, Annie had gone on horseback, attended by an old coachman who had lived in the family many years. Having accomplished her mission, she had ridden about a quarter of a mile on her return when she discovered that she had left her handkerchief behind, and directing the servant to ride back and fetch it, she proceeded at a foot's pace in a homeward direction. The road she was following wound round the base of a hill thickly covered with trees and underwood, the spreading branches of the oaks meeting across the lane and making a species of twilight even at midday.

As Annie Grant was passing under one of the thickest of these trees, a tall, gaunt figure sprang from behind its knotted trunk and seized the bridle of her pony. Gazing in alarm at her assailant, Annie perceived him to be a man of unusual stature; his features were pale and emaciated, and an unshorn, grizzly beard added to the ferocity of their expression; his clothes, which were torn and soiled, hung loosely about him, while the long bony fingers which clutched her bridle-rein, the sunken cheeks, and hollow, glaring eye-balls, gave evidence that his herculean proportions had been reduced almost to a skeleton leanness by disease or want. Annie had, however, little time to make observations, for, accosting her with an oath, the ruffian demanded her purse. Drawing it forth, she held it to him with a trembling hand. He seized it eagerly and examined its contents, his eyes glittering as he observed the sparkle of gold. Hastily concealing it about his person, he next demanded her watch, which Annie, after a hopeless glance in the direction from which she expected the appearance of the servant, also relinquished. Having secured his plunder the fellow paused, apparently reflecting whether by detaining her longer he could gain any further advantage; as he did so the sound of a horse rapidly advancing struck his ear, and immediately afterwards a turn in the road enabled him to perceive the figure of a servant on horseback, the sunshine glancing from his bright livery buttons. The moment this object met his view he started, and shading his eyes with his hand, gazed fixedly at the approaching horseman. Having thus satisfied himself as to the man's identity, he exclaimed with an oath, "It is the old bloodhound's livery, and the girl must be his daughter. Oh, what a chance I have thrown away! Yes," he continued, turning fiercely upon poor Annie and threatening her with his clenched fist, "if I had guessed you were the daughter of that — old Grant, you should not have got off so easy, I promise you." He paused as a new idea struck him, and his face assumed an expression of diabolical revenge; placing his hand in his breast he drew forth a pistol, cocked it, and muttering, "There is time yet," levelled it at his trembling victim. With a faint scream Annie dropped the reins, and clasping her hands in an agony of fear, murmured a petition for mercy. The ruffian stood for a moment irresolute; but, desperate as he was, some touch of humanity yet lingered in his breast, a softening recollection came across him,

and muttering, "I can't do it, she looks like poor Jane," he uncocked and replaced the pistol.

At this moment the servant, having heard Annie's scream, came up at a gallop, and the robber, uttering a fearful imprecation, sprang back into the wood and disappeared among the trees.

It was some minutes before Annie, who was on the verge of fainting, was able to give a coherent account of the adventure which had befallen her. As soon, however, as she had in some degree recovered from the effects of her terror, she desired the servant to ride close beside her, and urging her pony into a rapid canter, made the best of her way home. Here she found matters in a state of unusual bustle and confusion. The General had received information that Hardy the poacher had broken out of H—— gaol, effected his escape unperceived, and was supposed to be concealed somewhere in the neighbourhood of Broadhurst. Accordingly he was marshalling all the available males of his establishment, preparatory to setting out on an expedition to search for, and if possible to apprehend the escaped felon.

Great was his horror and indignation when he learned the danger to which his daughter had been exposed, and ascertained from the description she gave of her assailant that the man who had robbed her, and even threatened her life, was none other than the ruffian Hardy.

The preparations which he had already made he now considered insufficient for ensuring the success of the expedition; he accordingly despatched a mounted groom to procure the assistance of a couple of policemen, and sending for Lewis, begged him to lead a party to search the country in one direction, while he proceeded with a second division of the household forces in another. As the young tutor heard of the alarm to which Annie had been subjected, his cheeks flushed and his compressed lips quivered. He said little, however, but returning to his room, placed a brace of small pistols in the breast of his coat, attached spurs to the heels of his boots, then mounting a horse which was in readiness for him, rode off. The tenants were roused, the gamekeepers summoned, the policemen arrived. General Grant remained absent till nearly ten o'clock at night, and his daughter became alarmed to the last degree for his safety. At length he returned; their search had been unsuccessful, but Mr. Arundel and some of the men would remain on the watch all night, and he would resume the pursuit next morning.

For three days and nights Lewis never entered a house, and was scarcely out of the saddle; the fourth day the police received a report from the authorities at Liverpool, stating that an individual in some degree corresponding to the description of Hardy had taken his passage in a vessel bound for the United States, and that the wind being favourable, the ship had sailed before they had been able to search her; and with this unsatisfactory report the family at Broadhurst were forced to content themselves.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IS CALCULATED TO "MURDER SLEEP" FOR ALL NERVOUS YOUNG LADIES WHO READ IT.

THE incident related in the last chapter produced a strange and alarming effect upon Miss Livingstone; in fact it may be said to have laid the foundation of a species of monomania which haunted her to the day of her death. From this time forth she laboured under the delusion that a man trained from his youth up to rob and murder his sleeping fellow-creatures was secreted at one and the same moment under every bed and behind all the window curtains in the house. A singular and alarming property belonging to this ambushed ruffian was the extraordinary shadow cast by his legs and feet. Miss Livingstone was perpetually scared by discovering it in the most unlikely places and positions; indeed the statistics of these shadowy phenomena tended to show that it was this villain's ordinary custom to stand upon his rascally head. Then the noises he made were most strange and unearthly, and a habit he possessed of moaning whenever the wind was high really exceeded anything with which human nature could be expected to put up. The trouble he occasioned everybody was inconceivable; for at least a month after Annie's adventure the butler almost lived in Minerva's bedroom, so constantly was he summoned to unearth this lurking traitor; and yet, although Miss Livingstone was quite certain the monster was there, for she had seen the shadow of his boots, with the soles upwards, upon the tester of the bed, by some dreadful fatality he always contrived to evade the strictest search. Once Miss Livingstone thought she *had* got him, for, having summoned assistance on the strength of hearing him snore, she actually enjoyed the satisfaction of being sworn at by him, when she looked under the bed and poked for him with a large umbrella; but this time he turned out to be the cat. The servants became so harassed by these repeated alarms that at length the butler gave *bonâ fide* warning, while the footmen, when there was nobody to hear them, vehemently protested they were not hired as thief-catchers, and that Miss Livingstone had better set up a private policeman of her own, if she chose to be so subject to house-breakers.

Lewis was not at all pleased with this adventure: in the first place, it interrupted the German lessons, for poor Annie had been so seriously frightened—not without cause—that it made her really ill, and for some days she remained on a sofa in her own room. In the second place, Lewis had been so deeply affected when he first heard of the danger to which she had been exposed, that for a moment a doubt crossed his mind whether such a degree of emotion was exactly consistent with that mild imposition yclept platonic friendship. In the third place, he had used his best endeavours to catch Hardy once again, and had been thoroughly and completely baffled. Time, however, that wonder-working individual, passed on, and by his assistance Annie's nerves recovered their tone, and the German lessons were

recommenced; Miss Livingstone saw fewer visions of reversed legs, and confined her researches after the concealed one to a good peep under the bed night and morning. The General made a great fuss about the whole affair, and severely reprimanded several individuals for permitting Hardy to escape who never had it in their power to prevent his doing so. Having relieved his mind by this judicious exercise of authority, he applied himself to other pursuits, and speedily forgot the whole transaction.

About two months after the occurrence of the robbery Lord Bellefield wrote to announce his return, and General Grant went to London alone in order to meet him. Before his departure, Annie, whose dislike to the interrupted engagement appeared to increase rather than to diminish, determined to make a great effort, and to acquaint her father with her disinclination to the proposed alliance, and to entreat him to take no steps which might lead to a renewal of the matrimonial project. The General heard her attentively, and then observed—

“I perfectly understand and appreciate your feelings, my dear Annie; they are such as, under the peculiar circumstances, become *my* daughter. Remember, my dear, that the matter is in wiser and more experienced hands than yours; and rest assured that nothing shall be done of which even your punctilious delicacy and true sense of honour can disapprove.” Then, seeing Annie was about to speak, he continued, “Any further discussion is not only unnecessary, but as the matter now stands, would appear to imply a doubt of my capability of acting for you; which I should consider, to say the least, disrespectful. You will oblige me by withdrawing, my dear Annie.” Thus saying, he rose, and opening the door with all the frigid courtesy of the Grandisonian school, ushered her out. And so poor Annie’s attempt proved a signal failure.

On the following morning the General left Broadhurst, having given Annie a very unnecessary caution against riding out with merely a servant, and made it his especial request that Lewis and Walter should accompany her by way of escort; a proceeding of which neither tutor nor pupil appeared to disapprove.

General Grant was absent for more than a fortnight; and as the weather was unusually fine during the whole of the time, Annie and her attendants rode out every day. Oh, those rides! what delightful expeditions were they! By a tacit consent between Lewis and Annie, all allusion to the future was avoided, in word or thought; they lived in the present—those loving hearts; they were together, and that sufficed them; and the trees appeared greener, and the flowers more brilliant, and the sunshine brighter, than they had ever seemed before; all was happy as a fairy dream, and dream-like did it pass away.

A letter from the General announcing his intended return was in Annie’s hand, as, bending over a ponderous volume of crabbed characters, she awaited her German lesson. The windows of the breakfast-room in which she was seated opened on to an ample lawn, interspersed with groups of shrubs and gay flower-beds. In crossing

this lawn Walter had contrived to intercept Lewis and inveigle him into a game at ball.

Flushed by the exercise, his eyes sparkling with excitement, and his dark curls hanging in wild disorder about his brow, the young tutor approached the window at which Annie was seated. Concealed by the heavy folds of the window curtain, the girl watched him unperceived: involuntarily she contrasted his frank and easy bearing, his free and elastic step, and the smile, half proud, half playful, which parted his curved lips and sparkled in his flashing eyes, with the cold reserve which usually characterised his demeanour, and for the first time she became aware what a bright and noble nature had been obscured and warped by the false position into which circumstances had combined to force him. Who could blame her, who rather would not love her the better, and thank God that He has implanted such beautiful instincts in every true woman's heart, if she felt that she should wish no fairer destiny than to devote her life to bring back the sunshine of his, and by her affection restore to him the youth of soul which misfortune had wrested from him!

Little guessing the thoughts that were passing through her mind, Lewis advanced towards the window, exclaiming, "Miss Grant, I have a petition to urge—the day is so lovely it is quite wicked to remain indoors: can I persuade you to use your influence with Miss Livingstone to allow us to transfer the site of our German lesson to the bench under the lime-tree? I will promise to arrange a most seductive seat for her in the very shadiest corner."

"My aunt has departed on a charitable mission," was the reply; "she received a message to say that an unfortunate child whom she has been doctoring out of that dreadful medicine chest of hers is much worse, and she has rushed off armed with pills and powders."

"To give it the *coup de grace*, I suppose," interrupted Lewis.

Annie shook her head reprovingly, and continued, "In the excitement of the occasion, she appears to have entirely forgotten our poor German lesson."

"In which case the decision as to place rests with you!" resumed Lewis eagerly; "the matter is therefore settled—you *will* come." The accent upon the "*will*" was intended to be one of entreaty, but somehow the tone in which it was uttered partook largely of command, and Annie, as she obeyed, said with a smile—

"Or rather, I *must* come—that is clearly your meaning, Mr. Arundel; however, I see Walter and Faust are already *en position*, and I will not set them an example of disobedience, so if you can find the books, I will join you immediately."

It was, as Lewis had declared, a lovely evening; the sky was of that deep, clear blue which indicates a continuance of fine weather, a soft breeze sighed through the blossoms of the lime-tree beneath which they sat. Faust lay at Annie's feet, gazing up into her face as though he loved to look upon her beauty, which perhaps he did, for Faust was a dog of taste, and particular in the selection of his favourites. Walter, stretched at his length upon the turf, was idly turning over the pages of a volume of coloured prints. Lewis opened the work

they were translating; it was that loveliest of historical tragedies, Schiller's "Piccolomini," and Annie read of Max, the simple, the true, the noble-hearted, and thought that the world contained but one parallel character, and that he was beside her. They read on beneath the summer sky, and tracing the workings of Schiller's master mind, forgot all sublunary things in the absorbing interest of the story. The scene they were perusing was that in which Max Piccolomini describes the chilling effect produced upon him when he for the first time beholds Thekla surrounded by the splendours of her father's court, and says (I quote Coleridge's beautiful translation for the benefit of my *un*-German readers, and in consideration of the shallowness of my own acquaintance with the language of the Fatherland)—

"Now, once again, I have courage to look on you,
To-day at noon I could not;
The dazzle of the jewels that play'd round you
Hid the beloved from me.

This morning when I found you in the circle
Of all your kindred, in your father's arms,
Beheld myself an alien in this circle,
Oh! what an impulse felt I in that moment
To fall upon his neck and call him father;
But his stern eye o'erpower'd the swelling passion,
I dared not but be silent—and those brilliants
That like a crown of stars enwreath'd your brows,
They scared me too—Oh! wherefore, wherefore should he
At the first meeting spread, as 'twere, the ban
Of excommunication round you?—wherefore
Dress up the angel for the sacrifice,
And cast upon the light and joyous heart
The mournful burden of *his* station? Fitly
May love woo love, but such a splendour
Might none but monarchs venture to approach."

As Lewis read this speech, the bright, happy look faded from his face, and his voice grew deep and stern; there was in the whole scene a strange likeness to his own position, which pained him in the extreme, and brought back all his most bitter feelings. Engrossing as was this idea when once aroused, he could not but observe the unusual degree of taste and energy which Annie, who appeared carried away by the interest of the drama, infused into her reading, and the tones of her sweet voice did ample justice to the friendly, confiding tenderness with which Thekla endeavours to console her lover. After her appeal to the Countess Tertsky—

"He's not in spirits, wherefore is he not?
He had quite another nature on the journey,
So calm, so bright, so joyous eloquent"—

she turns to Max, saying—

"It was my wish to see you always so,
And never otherwise."



THE GERMAN LESSON.

Annie spoke the last words so earnestly that Lewis involuntarily glanced at her, and their eyes met. It was one of those moments which occur twice or thrice in a lifetime, when heart reads heart, as an open book, and sympathetic thought reveals itself unaided by that weak interpreter the tongue. Through weary years of sorrow and separation that look was unforgotten by either of them; and when Annie bent her eyes on the ground with a slight blush, confessing that the large amount of womanly tenderness which she fain would show was not unmingled with a portion of womanly love which she would as fain conceal, and Lewis dared not trust himself to speak lest the burning thoughts which crowded on his brain should force themselves an utterance, neither of them was sorry to perceive the figure of Aunt Martha rustling crisply through the stillness, as, burthened with boluses, Minerva appeared before them, to give a triumphant account of her victory over Tommy Crudle's catarrhal affection, of which ailment she promised Annie a reversion for her imprudence in sitting out of doors without a bonnet.

When Lewis retired to his room that night he sat down to think over in solitude the occurrences of the day. Had he been deceiving himself, then? was his unhappy attachment still unsubdued—nay, had it not strengthened? under the delusive garb of friendship, had not Annie's society become necessary to his happiness? Again—and as this idea for the first time occurred to him, the strong man trembled like a child from the violence of his emotion—had he not more than this to answer for? Selfishly engrossed by his own feelings, madly relying on his own strength of will, which he now perceived he had but too good reason to mistrust, he had never contemplated the effect his behaviour might produce upon a warm-hearted and imaginative girl. Lewis was no coxcomb, but he must have wilfully closed his eyes had he not read in Annie's manner that morning the fact that she was by no means indifferent to him. True, it might be only friendship on her part—the natural impulse of a woman's heart to pity and console one who she perceived to need such loving-kindness—and with this forlorn hope Lewis was fain to content himself. Then he strove to form wise resolutions for the future: he would avoid her society—the German lessons should be strictly confined to business, and gradually discontinued; and even a vague notion dimly presented itself of a time—say a year thence—when Walter might be entrusted to other hands, and he should be able to extricate himself from a situation so fraught with danger. And having thus regarded the matter by the light of principle and duty, feeling began to assert its claims, and he cursed his bitter fortune, which forced him to avoid one whom he would have braved death itself to win. He sat pondering these things deep into the night; the sound of the clock over the stables striking two at length aroused him from his reverie, and he was about to undress, when a slight growl from Faust, who always slept on a mat in Lewis's dressing-room, attracted his attention, and as he paused to listen, a low whistle, which seemed to proceed from the shrubs under his window, caught his ear. Closing the door

of the dressing-room to prevent Faust from giving any alarm, he walked lightly to the window, which, according to his usual custom, he left open all night, and silently holding back the curtain, looked out. As he did so a window on the ground floor was cautiously opened and the whistle repeated. After a moment's reflection he became convinced that the room from which the signal whistle had been replied to was occupied by the new butler, who had replaced the individual harassed into the desperate step of resigning by Minerva's incessant crusades against the Under-the-bed One. At the sound of the signal whistle the figures of four men appeared from the shrubs, amongst which they had been hidden, and noiselessly approached the window. The candle which Lewis had brought upstairs with him had burned out; and although his window was open, the curtains were drawn across it; he was therefore able, himself unperceived, to see and hear all that was going on. As the burglars, for such he did not doubt they were, drew near, the following conversation was carried on in a low whisper between their leader, a man of unusual stature, and Simmonds the butler.

"You are late; the plate has been packed and ready for the last two hours."

"There was a light in the ——d tutor's room till half-an-hour ago," was the reply; "and we thought he might hear us and give the alarm if we did not wait till he was in bed."

"It would not have much signified if he had when you were once in," returned Simmonds: "the grooms don't sleep in the house; the valet is in London; so there's only the tutor, the footman, and the idiot boy, besides women."

"Where is the old man?" inquired the other.

"Not returned," was the answer.

A brutal curse was the rejoinder, and the robber continued, "The girl is safe?"

"Yes."

"And the tutor?"

"Yes. What do you want with them?"

"To knock out his ——d brains, and take her with us," was the alarming reply. Simmonds appeared to remonstrate, for the robber replied in a louder tone than he had yet used—

"I tell you, *yes!* Old Grant shall know what it is to lose a daughter as well as other people."

Afraid lest the loudness of his voice should give the alarm, the other exclaimed in an anxious whisper—

"Hush! come in;" and one after the other the four men entered by the open window.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONTAINS A "MIDNIGHT STRUGGLE," GARNISHED WITH A DUE AMOUNT OF BLOODSHED, AND OTHER NECESSARY HORRORS.

LEWIS, having overheard the conversation detailed in the preceding chapter, perceived himself to be placed in a position alike dangerous and difficult. In the spokesman and leader of the party he had recognised (as the reader has probably also done) his old antagonist, Hardy the poacher. The matter then stood thus: four ruffians (one of whom, burning with the desire of revenge for wrongs real and supposed, possessed strength and resolution equal to his animosity) were already in possession of the lower part of the house, their avowed objects being robbery, murder, and abduction; the butler, faithless to his trust, was clearly an accomplice; Hardy, fighting as it were with a halter round his neck, was not likely to stick at trifles, and Lewis foresaw that the conflict, once begun, would be for life or death, and on its successful issue depended Annie's rescue from a fate worse than death. His only ally was the footman; and whether this lad's courage would desert him when he discovered the odds against which he had to contend was a point more than doubtful. However, there was no time to deliberate; Lewis felt that he must act, and summoning all the energies of his nature to meet so fearful an emergency, he prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible. On attempting to unlock his pistol case the key turned with difficulty, and it was not without some trouble and delay that he was enabled to open it. As he did so, it occurred to him that his pistols, which he kept loaded, might have been tampered with. It was fortunate that he thought of ascertaining this, for on inserting the ramrod he found the bullets had been withdrawn from both barrels. Carefully reloading them, he placed the pistols in a breast-pocket ready for use, and taking down from a nail on which it hung a cavalry sabre which had belonged to Captain Arundel, he unsheathed it, and grasping it firmly with his right hand, he turned to leave the room, with the design of arousing the footman. As he did so a faint tap was heard, and on opening the door the figure of Annie Grant, pale and trembling, wrapped in a dressing-gown and shawl, appeared before him, while her French *soubrette*, in an agony of fear, was leaning against the wall listening (with eyes that appeared ready to start out of her head with fright) for every sound below. As Lewis advanced Annie perceived the sabre, and pointing towards it, she exclaimed in an agitated whisper—

"Oh! you have heard them, then! what will become of us?"

Lewis took her trembling hand in his.

"Calm yourself," he said in the same low tone; "I will defend you, and if needs be, die for you."

His words, spoken slowly and earnestly, appeared to act like a charm upon her. She became at once composed, and looking up in his face with an expression of childlike trust, inquired—

"And what shall I do?"

"Go back to your apartment and pray for my success; God is merciful, and will not turn a deaf ear to such angel pleadings," was the solemn reply.

Annie again gazed earnestly at him, and reading in the stern resolution of his features the imminence of their danger, was turning away with a sickening feeling of despair at her heart, when Lewis again addressed her.

"I am going to awaken the man-servant," he said; "the butler is an accomplice of these scoundrels, and has admitted them. They cannot, however, molest you without ascending the stairs, and as they do that I shall encounter them; the result is in the hands of God."

He was about to leave her, but there was a speechless misery in her face as she gazed upon him which he could not resist. In an instant he was by her side.

"Dear Annie," he said, and his deep tones faltered from the intensity of his emotion—*it was the first time he had ever called her by her Christian name*—"Dear Annie, do not look at me thus sorrowfully; it is true we are in peril, but I have ere now braved greater danger than this successfully, and—should I fall, life has few charms for me—to die for you—!"

At this moment the sound of a man's voice in anger was heard from the lower part of the house, and starting forward with a scarcely suppressed cry of terror, the French girl seized Lewis's arm, while, pointing in the direction of the footman's room, she exclaimed—

"Allez, allez, cherchez vite du secours, nous allons être assassinés tous."

Lewis placed his finger on his lips in token of silence, and listened a moment as the voices below were again audible and then died away.

"They are quarrelling over their booty," he said, "and are too well occupied to think of us at present."

He then led Annie to the door of her room, urged her to fasten it on the inside, and pressing her hand warmly, left her. After one or two futile attempts he discovered the man-servant's apartment; the door was unfastened, and he pushed it open, when the loud, regular breathing which met his ear proved that the person of whom he was in search was as yet undisturbed. Approaching the bed, Lewis paused for a moment, and shading the light with his hand, gazed upon the face of the sleeper. He was scarcely beyond the age of boyhood, and his features presented more delicacy of form than is usually to be met with in the class to which he belonged. He was sleeping as quietly as a child; while Lewis watched him, he murmured some inarticulate sounds, and a smile played about his mouth. As Lewis stooped to wake him, he could not but mentally contrast the calm sleep from which he was arousing him with the probable scene of violence and danger in which he would so soon be engaged. It was no time for such reflections, however, and laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, he said—

"Robert, you are wanted, rouse up!"

Startled by the apparition of a tall figure bending over him, the young man sprang up, exclaiming—

"What's the matter? who is it?" then recognising Lewis, he continued, "Mr. Arundel! is anybody ill, sir?"

"Hush!" was the reply; "get up and put on your clothes as quickly as possible; there are thieves in the house. I will wait at the top of the stairs till you join me; but make no noise, or you may bring them upon us before we are prepared for them."

So saying, he quitted the room. In less time than he had imagined it possible, the young servant joined him.

"Have you roused Mr. Simmonds?" was his first query.

"The butler has proved unworthy of the trust reposed in him," returned Lewis; "he has admitted these men into the house, and they are now in his pantry, preparing to carry off the plate."

As he spoke his companion's colour rose, and with flashing eyes he exclaimed, "Let us go down and prevent them; there's plate worth £500 under his care."

Lewis held the lamp so that it shed its light upon the young man's face and figure. He was a tall, well-grown youth, and his broad shoulders and muscular arms gave promise of strength; his eye was keen and bright, and an expression of honest indignation imparted firmness to his mouth. Lewis felt that he might be relied on, and determined to trust him accordingly.

"They have worse designs than merely stealing the plate," he said; "they intend to carry off Miss Grant, and murder me. Chance enabled me to overhear their plan; I mean, therefore, to wait at the top of the stairs and use *any* means to prevent their ascending them: will you stand by me?"

"Ay, that I will; a man can but die once," was the spirited reply.

Lewis grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"You are a brave fellow," he said, "and if we succeed in beating off these scoundrels, it shall not be my fault if your fortune is not made. There is a carabine hanging in the General's bedroom, is there not?"

Receiving an answer in the affirmative, Lewis continued, "Fetch it, then, and the sword with it, if you think you can use it."

As Robert departed on this mission, Lewis, surprised at the delay on the part of Hardy and his associates, glided lightly down the staircase to reconnoitre their proceedings. The lower part of the house was of course in total darkness; but as he approached the butler's pantry a bright stream of light issued from a crack in the door, while the tramp of nailed shoes on the stone flooring inside, together with an occasional muttered word or oath from one of the party, proved that they were busily engaged in some toilsome occupation, which Lewis rightly conjectured to be conveying the plate to a cart outside. Returning as cautiously as he had advanced, Lewis rejoined his companion, whom he found waiting for him at the top of the stairs, carabine in hand. Having ascertained that the charge had been removed from this also, he reloaded it with some of the slugs intended

for his pistols, and placing the lamp so that it cast its light down the staircase, leaving the spot where they stood in shade, he handed one pistol to Robert, reserving the other for his own use in any emergency which might occur; and thus prepared they awaited the approach of the robbers. Their patience was not in this instance destined to be severely taxed, for scarcely had they taken their stations when the creaking of a door cautiously opened, and the tread of muffled footsteps announced that the crisis was at hand; and in another moment Hardy and his associates were seen stealthily advancing towards the foot of the stairs. As they perceived the light of Lewis's lamp they paused, and a whispered consultation took place. At this moment the rays fell strongly upon the upper part of the poacher's figure, and Lewis, levelling his carbine, could have shot him through the heart. It was a strong temptation. Hardy once dead, Lewis had little fear of being able to overcome or intimidate the others. He knew that it was life for life, and that by all laws, human and divine, the act would be a justifiable one; but he could not bring himself to slay a fellow-creature in cold blood. Besides, although since his unmanly attack on Annie, Lewis had felt in the highest degree irritated against the poacher, he compassionated him for the loss of his daughter, and could not entirely divest himself of a species of admiration for his strength and daring; so, though he still held the carbine directed towards the group, he did not pull the trigger; and thus, by a strange turn of fate, Lewis spared Hardy's life, as Hardy had on a former occasion spared his, when the motion of a finger would have sent him to his long account. At this moment the butler joined the party, and Lewis caught the words, "They have fire-arms!"

"Never fear," was the reply in the tones of Simmonds' voice, "they may bark, but they won't bite; I've taken care of that."

"Come on, then," exclaimed Hardy impetuously; "let us rush at them together and overpower them;" and grasping a bludgeon with one hand, while in the other he held a cocked pistol, he dashed upstairs followed by his accomplices. Lewis waited till they had passed a turn in the staircase, and then aiming low, in order if possible to stop their advance without destroying life, he fired. Simmonds, who was one of the foremost, immediately fell, and losing his balance, rolled down several steps; one of the others paused in his career, and from his limping gait was evidently wounded; but Hardy and two more continued their course uninjured. The smoke of the discharge for a moment concealed Lewis's figure; as it cleared away, Hardy levelled his pistol at him and fired. The bullet whistled by Lewis's ear, and passing within an inch of his right temple, lodged in the wall behind him; while, following up his ineffectual shot, the robber rushed upon him. Lewis, however, had too keen a recollection of his antagonist's matchless strength to risk the chance of allowing him to close with him, and springing back, he struck him, quick as lightning, two blows with the sabre—the first on his arm, which he raised to protect his head, the second and most severe one on the shoulder near the neck: this last blow staggered him, and reeling dizzily, he grasped the banister for support, the blood trickling from the wound in his

shoulder. In the meantime the two others, one of them having felled the young footman to the ground by a back-handed stroke with a bludgeon, attacked Lewis simultaneously. Having parried one or two blows with his sabre, Lewis made a desperate cut at the head of the man with the bludgeon. The fellow raised his staff to ward off the stroke, and the blow fell upon the oak sapling, which it severed like a reed; but unfortunately the shock was too great, and the sword snapped near the hilt. Seeing that he was thus left defenceless, and might probably be overpowered, as both his assailants were strong, square-built fellows, Lewis had no resource but to draw his pistol; and, as before, endeavouring to aim so as to disable without destroying life, he fired, and the man nearest to him fell. His comrade immediately threw himself upon the young tutor, and a fierce struggle ensued. In point of strength the combatants were very equally matched; but, fortunately for the result, Lewis was the most active, and by a sudden wrench disengaging himself from his antagonist's grasp, he struck him a tremendous blow with his clenched fist on the side of the head, which sent him down with the force of a battering-ram. As he did so a giant arm was thrown round his waist, a knife gleamed at his throat, and in a hoarse, broken voice, the savage ferocity of which had something appalling in its tones, Hardy exclaimed—

“I've owed you something a long time, young feller; and now I've got a chance, I'm going to pay you.”

Both his hands being occupied, he, with the fury of some beast of prey, seized Lewis's hair with his teeth, and endeavoured to draw his head back in order to cut his throat; but, by dint of struggling, Lewis had contrived to get his right arm free, and grasping the wrist of the hand which held the weapon, he was enabled, as long as his strength might hold out, to prevent the ruffian from executing his murderous purpose. Hardy made one or two efforts to shake off the grasp which thus fettered him, but his muscular power was so much impaired by the sabre cut on the arm that he was unable to accomplish his design. Accordingly, trusting to his great strength, and thinking that Lewis would become exhausted by his attempts to free himself, Hardy determined to wait rather than run the risk of affording his victim a chance of escape by removing the arm which encircled him. While affairs were in this position, Robert, having recovered the stunning effects of the blow which had felled him, regained his feet, and was advancing to Lewis's assistance when the robber who had been slightly wounded in the leg as he was ascending the stairs, and had since remained a passive spectator of the struggle, interposed, and rousing, through the medium of a kick in the ribs, the fellow whom Lewis had knocked down, closed with the young servant, and attempted to wrench the pistol (which went off in the scuffle without injuring any one) from his grasp, while his accomplice, gathering himself slowly from the floor, prepared to assist him. In the meantime the struggle between Lewis and Hardy appeared likely to terminate in favour of the young tutor, for the exertions made by the poacher to retain his captive caused the blood to flow rapidly from his wounds, and a sensation of faintness stole over him which

threatened momentarily to incapacitate him. As he became aware of this fact his fury and disappointment knew no bounds; and collecting his powers for one final effort, he released Lewis's waist, and transferring his grasp to his coat collar, suddenly flung his whole weight upon him and bore him heavily to the ground; then raising himself and planting his knee on Lewis's chest, he stretched out his hand to pick up the knife which he had dropped in this last attack. Had he made the attempt one minute sooner, it would have been successful, and Lewis would indeed have laid down his life for her he loved; but his time was not yet come. As the poacher leant over to reach the knife, a dizzy faintness overpowered him, his brain reeled; a slight effort on Lewis's part was sufficient to dislodge him, and uttering a hollow groan, he rolled over on his back and lay motionless, his deep, laboured breathing alone testifying that he was still alive. Hastily springing from the ground, Lewis, on regaining his feet, turned to assist his companion, who was still manfully battling with his two assailants: as he did so the sound of feet became audible, and the gardener and three of the other outdoor servants, aroused by the report of fire-arms, rushed in, having effected their entrance by the open window of the pantry. Their arrival ended the affair. The burglar who was uninjured, finding the door of Lewis's bedroom open, took refuge there, leaped from the window, alighted on some shrubs, which broke his fall, and the darkness favouring him, effected his escape. The other four, who were all wounded more or less seriously, were secured.

A surgeon was immediately sent for: he examined Hardy (who remained in a state of unconsciousness) first. He pronounced the cut in the arm of little consequence, but the wound in the neck had divided several important vessels, and he considered it highly dangerous. The burglar at whom Lewis had discharged his pistol was severely wounded in the hip, but the surgeon did not apprehend any serious consequences. Simmonds, the butler, proved to have been hit in the knee by a slug from the carbine, an injury which would probably lame him for life. The remaining member of the gang had come off more easily, a shot having passed through the fleshy part of the leg; Robert, the servant, displayed a broken head; and Lewis, besides being severely bruised, had in the last struggle with Hardy received a wound in the left wrist from the point of the ruffian's knife. As soon as, by the application of proper restoratives, Hardy became sufficiently recovered to bear removal, a carriage was sent for, and the captured burglars were conveyed to the nearest town; the two most severely injured were taken to the hospital, and the other pair securely lodged in the county gaol.

On Annie's expressions of gratitude to her preservers, or on the feelings with which Lewis heard her lips pronounce his praises, we will not dwell, neither will we expatiate on the view Miss Livingstone (who appeared in a tremendous nightcap of cast-iron white-washed, and a dressing-gown of Portland stone) was pleased to take of the affair, in which she recognised a vindication of the reality of the individual who was always under the beds *and* behind the curtains,

who for the future she declared to have been Hardy, professing herself able to swear to the expression of his boots in any court of justice throughout the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WHEREIN THE READER DIVERGES INTO A NEW BRANCH OF "THE RAILROAD OF LIFE" IN A THIRD-CLASS CARRIAGE.

LEWIS, bruised and wearied after his skirmish with the housebreakers, flung himself on a sofa in his dressing-room, to try if he could obtain a few hours' sleep ere fresh cares and duties should devolve upon him; but sleep demands a calm frame of mind, and in his spirit there was no peace. One thought haunted him—in his brief and agitating interview with Annie, had he betrayed himself? Sometimes, as he recalled the words he had spoken, and the feelings which had as it were forced them from him, he felt that he must have done so; and then he regretted that Hardy's bullet had flown wide of its mark, and wished that he were lying there a senseless corpse rather than a living man endowed with power to feel, and therefore to suffer. Then he bethought him how alarmed and confused Annie had appeared, and he conceived that she might have been too thoroughly preoccupied and self-engrossed to have marked his words, or to have attributed to them any meaning save friendly interest. One thing was only too clear: of whatever nature might be Annie's feelings towards him, his affection for her was love—deep, fervent, earnest love—a passion that he could neither banish nor control. How then should he act? flight had now become the idea that most readily occurred to him: again, the possibility of leaving Walter presented itself to his mind, and this time not as a mere remote contingency, but as a step which he might at any moment be called upon to take, if he could not recover his self-control so entirely as to endure Annie's presence; nay, to receive marks of her gratitude and esteem, or even, on occasion, to share her confidence, without betraying his feelings. Then in his self-tormenting he caught at the expression which he had half thought, half uttered, to "*endure*" her presence—to endure that which he idolised, the presence of one for whom he would sacrifice friends, family, the love of adventure, his ambitious hopes, nay, as he had but now proved, life itself. A wild idea crossed his mind: if love were thus all-powerful with him, a strong-minded, determined man, might it not be equally so with her, a young, impulsive girl, whose very nature was an embodiment of tenderness; might she not secretly pine to sacrifice rank, station, riches, for the sake of love and him? Sacrifice—ay, rather rejoice to cast off such trammels! Should he strive to ascertain this? Should he tell her how he loved her with a passion that was undermining the secret springs of his very existence, and implore her to fly with him to some fair western land, where the false distinctions of

society were undreamed of, and the brave, true-hearted man was lord, not of his servile fellows, but of the creation which God had destined him to rule? The picture, seen by the false glare of his heated imagination, appeared a bright one, the lights stood out boldly, and the shadows remained unheeded till the first gleam of returning reason brought them prominently forward, and he shuddered to think that he could have entertained for a moment a project so completely at variance with every principle of honour and of duty. Thus feverish alike in mind and body, he tossed restlessly on his couch, till at length, thoroughly exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep, and dreamed bright dreams of happy love, to make the stern reality appear yet darker and more drear on waking.

On his return to Broadhurst, General Grant expressed his most unqualified admiration at the gallant defence of his house, property, and daughter (we quote his own "table of precedence") by Lewis and the man-servant. On the former he bestowed a sword (presented to him in bygone days by some Indian potentate) to replace the weapon broken in the struggle, together with a handsomely-bound copy of the "Wellington Despatches"; the latter he rewarded by promotion to the post of butler, *vice* Simmonds (in a fair way to be) transported, together with a *douceur* of twenty pounds; which piece of good fortune so elated the youthful Robert that he publicly declared he should like to have his head broken every night, and wished the house might be robbed regularly twice a week till further orders. The wounded men recovered rapidly, with the exception of Hardy, whose case assumed a very alarming character: owing to the state of his constitution, impaired by a course of intemperance, to which, since his escape from prison, he had given himself over, erysipelas supervened, and in a few days his life was despaired of. On receiving this intelligence Lewis rode over to H—, and calling at the hospital, requested to be allowed to see the man whose life he had been the involuntary instrument of shortening. The permission was readily accorded, and he was conducted along several passages to the room, or rather cell, for it was little else, in which, for the purpose of security as well as to separate him from the other inmates of the establishment, the burglar had been placed. As soon as Lewis had entered the door was closed and fastened on the outside. Noiselessly approaching the trundle bed on which Hardy lay, the young tutor paused as his glance fell upon the prostrate figure of his former antagonist. Stretched at full length upon the couch, his arm and shoulder swathed in bandages, and his muscular throat and broad, hairy chest partially uncovered, he looked even more gigantic than when in an erect posture: his face was pale as death, and an unnatural darkness beneath the skin betokened to any one accustomed to such appearances the speedy approach of the destroyer; while a small hectic spot of colour on the centre of each cheek gave evidence of the inward fever which was consuming him. When Lewis approached the bed his eyes were closed, and his deep breathing at first led to the belief that he was asleep; that this was not the case, however, soon became apparent. Opening his eyes, he accidentally encountered those of Lewis fixed upon him with an expres-

sion of mingled pity and remorse: as their glances met Hardy gave a start of surprise, and gazed at him with a scowl which proved that his feelings of animosity against Lewis were still unabated; while a puzzled look evinced that his mental powers were so much weakened that he doubted whether the figure he beheld were real or a creation of his morbid fancy. Advancing to the bedside, Lewis broke the silence by inquiring whether he suffered much pain. As he began to speak, the confused look disappeared from the sick man's countenance, and glaring at him with an expression of impotent rage, he exclaimed in a low, hoarse voice—

“So you're come to look upon your handiwork, are you? I hope you like it!”

“I am come to tell you that I am sorry the blows I struck you in self-defence should have produced such disastrous consequences, and to ask your forgiveness, in case the means employed for your restoration to health should prove ineffectual,” replied Lewis.

“Restore my health!” repeated Hardy bitterly. “Do you mean that you expect these doctors can cure me? Do you think these wounds, that burn like hell-fire, can be healed by their plasters and bandages? I tell you no! You have done your work effectually this time, and I am a dying man. You want me to forgive you, do you? If my curse could wither you where you stand, I would and *do* curse you! If priests' tales be true, and there be a heaven and a hell, and by forgiving you I could reach heaven, I still would curse you, in the hope that by so doing I might drag you down to hell with me.”

The vehemence with which he uttered this malediction completely exhausted him, and falling back on the pillow he lay with closed eyes, his laboured breathing affording the only proof that he was still alive. Throwing himself upon a chair by the bedside, Lewis sat wrapped in painful thought. The reflection that hatred to him for acts which circumstances had forced him to commit might cause the unhappy being before him to die impenitent, and that he might thus be instrumental to the destruction both of his body and soul, was distressing to him in the extreme; and yet how to bring him to a better frame of mind was not easy to decide. At length, following out his own train of thought, he asked abruptly—

“Hardy, why do you hate me so bitterly?”

Thus accosted, the poacher unclosed his eyes, and fixed them with a piercing glance upon the face of his questioner, as though he would read his very soul. Apparently disappointed in his object, for Lewis met his gaze with the calm self-possession of conscious rectitude, he answered surlily—

“Why do you come here to torment me with foolish questions? It is enough that I hate you with just cause—and you know that it is so. I hate you now, I shall hate you dying, and I shall hate you after death, if there is a hereafter. Now go. If by staying here you think to persuade or entrap me into saying I forgive you, you only waste your time.”

“Listen to me, Hardy,” returned Lewis, speaking calmly and impressively. “You are, as you truly say, a dying man. In this life

we shall probably never meet again. The reality of a future life you appear to doubt: I believe in it; and I believe that your condition there may be affected by your dying with such feelings in your heart as you have now expressed. It is therefore worth while to discuss this matter, and see whether you have such just cause to hate me as you imagine."

As Hardy made no reply, Lewis continued: "It is true that on a former occasion I secured your capture when perhaps I was stepping beyond my regular path of duty to do so; but in this last affair I merely acted in self-defence, as I overheard from my open window your scheme for my destruction. You discharged a pistol at me ere I attacked you: had the ball gone half an inch more to the right I should have been a dead man. Whatever may be your faults, you are brave; and that quality alone should prevent your bearing malice against one who met you in fair, open fight. It was a game for life and death, and it is unjust to hate me for winning it."

"Boy, you will madden me," exclaimed Hardy passionately, raising himself on his elbow as he spoke, though the pain the action caused him forced a groan from his compressed lips. "Do you suppose I care for your paltry blows? If they had not finished me, brandy or my own hand would soon have done so; for life has long been a curse to me, and had become unbearable since—may the torments I shall soon endure, if there be a hell, fall upon you for it!—since you and the titled scoundrel, your accomplice, stole my daughter from me."

"I!" exclaimed Lewis in astonishment. "Do you imagine me to have had any share in that wickedness? Why, man, I never saw your daughter save on two occasions; and on the second of these I warned her—unfortunately without effect—against the designs of the villain who betrayed her."

As he spoke Hardy gazed eagerly at him, and when he ceased, exclaimed—

"Tell me when and where was it that you did this?"

"It was on the morning after the electioneering ball at Broadhurst. I was shooting with the gamekeeper—met your daughter by accident in the grass field by the larch plantation—and witnessing her parting with Lord Bellefield, I took the opportunity of telling her his true name and character, and warning her against his probable designs. But, unluckily, she had observed a disagreement between us on the previous evening, and supposing me to be actuated by malicious motives, discredited my assertion."

"You are not deceiving me?" questioned Hardy eagerly. "You could not, dare not, do so now!"

"You do not know me, or you would not doubt my word. I have spoken the simple truth," returned Lewis coldly.

"Here!" continued Hardy, producing from beneath the pillow a small Bible which the chaplain had left with him: "you tell me you believe in this book. Will you swear upon it that you are not trying to deceive me?"

Lewis raised the book reverently to his lips, and kissing it, took the

required oath. Hardy watched him with a scrutinising gaze, and when he had concluded, held out his hand, saying—

“I have wronged you deeply, Mr. Arundel, and must ask—what I never thought again to ask at the hand of man—your forgiveness. I have sought your life, sir, as the wild beast seeks his prey; and chance, on one occasion, and your own courage and address on others, have alone preserved it.”

He then went on to relate how, his suspicions having been excited by hints from the neighbours, he had learned that his daughter was in the habit of meeting some gentleman by stealth. How he watched for this person constantly, without success, till the day after the great party at Broadhurst, when, lying concealed in the larch plantation, he had been attracted by the sound of voices, and creeping beneath the under-wood, had witnessed, though not near enough to overhear what passed, the interview between Lewis and his daughter, when he naturally concluded the young tutor to be the individual against whom he had been cautioned. He then went on to relate that the opportune arrival of the gamekeeper had alone prevented him from shooting the supposed libertine, but that he had determined on his destruction, and that his subsequent capture by Lewis and the General had alone hindered him from executing his design. It was not till after his escape from H——gaol that he first heard Lord Bellefield's name coupled with that of his daughter, which information complicated the affair; but still feeling convinced that Lewis was guilty, either as principal or accessory, he joined in the scheme for robbing Broadhurst, in order to be revenged on the young tutor, as well as on General Grant, against whom he had long nourished feelings of animosity, on account of his poaching persecutions.

His penitence for the wrong he had done him by his unjust suspicions were so sincere and spontaneous, that Lewis imagined he recognised, amid the ruin of a naturally generous disposition, that “seed of the soul” which remains in almost every nature, however the rank growth of evil passions uncontrolled may have checked its development. Taking advantage of an expression which Hardy used, that “he thanked God he had not added to his other sins the murder of one who had sought to befriend his child,” his companion observed—

“You say you thank God for preserving you from an additional crime: now, does not the fact of your involuntarily making use of that form of speech tend to convince you that the belief in a God and a future state is natural to the mind of man?”

Hardy seemed struck by the force of this remark, and Lewis, pursuing the subject, had the satisfaction of perceiving that he had excited the wounded man's interest, and ere he quitted him he obtained his promise to listen to the exhortations of the chaplain, whose advances he had hitherto angrily repulsed. Pleased with the result of his visit, Lewis on his way home called upon the clergyman who fulfilled the duties of chaplain to the hospital, and mentioning to him Hardy's improved frame of mind, begged him to see him again as soon as possible, to which request the chaplain willingly acceded.

Three days after this interview Lewis received a note from this

gentleman thanking him for his hint, and informing him that its results had been as satisfactory as in such a case was possible. Hardy appeared sincerely penitent, willing to embrace and anxious to profit by the truths of religion, as far as his weakened faculties enabled him to apprehend them. He added that he was sinking fast, and had expressed the greatest desire to see Lewis again before he died, as he had some request to make to him. On the receipt of this information Lewis immediately set out for H—.

A great alteration had taken place in Hardy's appearance in those three days. His cheeks had become still more hollow, the unnatural brightness of his eyes was replaced by a dull, leaden look, and the hectic colour had faded to the pale, ashy hue of approaching dissolution, whilst the hoarse, deep tones of his voice were reduced almost to a whisper through weakness. But the most remarkable change was in the expression of his features; the sullen scowl, which betokened a spirit at war alike with itself and others, had given place to a look of calm resignation; there were indeed traces of bodily pain and mental anguish about the mouth, but the upper part of the face was in complete repose. Lewis gazed upon him with deep interest, and the idea suggested itself that thus might have appeared the demoniac when the words of power had gone forth, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." Nor was the comparison inapt, for if ever the mind of man was possessed by an evil spirit, that of Hardy had been so by the demon of revenge. As the dying man perceived his approach his features lighted up.

"I knew you would come, Mr. Arundel," he said. "I felt that I should not die without seeing you again."

"Do you suffer much pain now, Hardy?" inquired Lewis kindly.

"Scarcely any since six o'clock this morning, sir," was the reply; "but I know what that means—that's mortification coming on. I've seen men die from sabre wounds before now. I was a soldier once—at least I was farrier to a troop of cavalry, which is much the same thing; but this was not what I wanted to say to you." He paused from exhaustion, and pointed to a glass containing some strengthening cordial. Lewis held it to his parched lips; having drunk a portion of it, he appeared considerably revived.

"I am going fast," he resumed, "and must not waste the minutes that remain. You have treated me with kindness, sir—one of the few who have ever done so; you are a bold foe and a warm-hearted friend, and that is a character I understand and can trust. Moreover, you tell me you showed poor Jane" (as he mentioned his daughter's name tears stood in his eyes and his breath came short and fast) "her danger, and strove to warn her against the villain who has wronged her, and this shows you are a good man; therefore I am going to ask you to do me a favour. When I am dead, I want you to find out Jane and tell her whatever you may think best to induce her to leave this man. And when she hears that I'm dead, if she seems to feel it very deep and take on about it—which likely enough she will, for she did care for me once—you may tell her that I forgave her before I died. I never thought to do so, for she has finished what her mother began;

between them they've first made me the devil I have been, and then—broken my heart.” He paused, and when he had sufficiently recovered breath, continued, “When I married her mother, five-and-twenty years ago, I was a different man from whatever you've known me. I'd been brought up to my father's trade of a blacksmith, and worked steadily at it till I was able to lay by a fair sum of money, besides keeping the old man as long as he was alive. However, in the village where we lived was a farmer, well-to-do in the world, and his daughter was far the prettiest girl in those parts; she'd had a good education, and gave herself airs like a lady, and looked down upon a rough young fellow like me; but I bore it patiently, for I loved her, and determined I'd never marry anybody but her. For a long time she would not look at me, but I persevered; any man that come a-courting her I picked a quarrel with and thrashed. I found many ways of making myself handy to the old man, her father, and somehow she got used to me like, and grew less scornful; and just then a sister of my father's, who had been housekeeper at Broadhurst, died and left me £300, and I'd saved about £200 more, and the old man wanted help to manage his farm. And the long and short of the matter was I married Harriet Wylde, took a farm next her father's, and gave up blacksmithing.

“For four years I was as happy as man could be; everything seemed to prosper with me. My wife had one child, a girl; a proud man was I when she was first placed in my arms, but had I known what was to be her fate I would have smothered her in her cradle! There was a young gentleman lived near us—his father was a rich baronet—I had been accustomed to break in horses for the son, and when I took the farm we used to shoot together. He was a frank, generous-hearted man, and treated me like a friend and equal. On our shooting expeditions he would often come and lunch at my house; on one occasion he brought his younger brother with him. This young fellow had just returned from Italy, and brought foreign manners and foreign vices with him. My wife was still very good-looking, like poor Jane, but handsomer; and this heartless villain coveted her beauty. I know not what arts he used; I suspected nothing, saw nothing, but one evening on my return my home was desolate. I obtained traces of the fugitives—he had taken her to a seaport town in the south of England, meaning to embark for France—I followed them, and in the open street I met him; the bystanders interfered between us, or I should have slain him where he stood. He was taken to an inn, where he kept his bed for some weeks from the effect of the punishment I had administered to him. I was dragged off to prison; the law which suffered him to rob me of her whom I prized more dearly than house and goods punished me for chastising the scoundrel with six months' imprisonment. I consorted with thieves, poachers, and other refuse of society; and in my madness to obtain revenge upon the class which had injured me, I listened to their specious arguments till I became the curse to myself and others which you, sir, have known me. Well, society sent me to school, and society has had the benefit of the lessons that were taught me. I came out of gaol a bad and well-nigh a desperate

man, to learn that my wife had returned to her father's house and died, giving birth to a boy. In my anger I refused to acknowledge the child, but the old man took care of it. Time passed on: the elder of the two brothers quarrelled with his father and died abroad, the younger one married; but God visited him for his sin. His wife saw by accident in an old newspaper an account of my trial for the assault; the shock brought on a premature confinement; she also died in childbirth, and the child remained an idiot. Yes! you start, but you have guessed rightly—the boy to whom you are tutor is the son of the man who wronged me. The ways of God are very wonderful: had the boy possessed his proper senses you might never have come here, and I might not now be lying on my death-bed.”

Again Hardy broke off from weakness, and again Lewis administered the cordial to him and wiped the cold dew from his brow.

“Little more remains to tell,” he added after a few minutes' pause; “and 'tis well that it is so, for death comes on apace. I do not fear to die; I have long wished myself dead, life was such deep misery, yet now I should be glad to live, that I might undo some of the evil I have caused. Since I saw you last I have felt more like my former self than I have ever done from the time my wife left me. Poor Harriet! Do you think we shall meet in the world of spirits, Mr. Arundel?”

“These are things God alone knows,” replied Lewis gravely. “He has not seen fit to reveal to living man the secrets of the grave!”

After a short silence, in which Hardy appeared to be collecting strength to finish his relation, he continued—

“After my release from the prison I took to drinking to banish reflection. Drinking is a vice which brings all others in its train. I soon fell into bad company, became involved in debt; and at last, in a drunken fit, enlisted in the ——th Dragoons, my height attracting the notice of a recruiting party from that regiment. I served ten years, at the end of which time my wife's father died and left his little property between the two children, with the exception of a sum to purchase my discharge if I chose to come and take care of them. The confinement and regularity of a soldier's life did not suit me, and I availed myself of the opportunity thus offered, returned home, and lived on a certain income set apart for the maintenance and education of the children. This was a fresh chance for me, and had I conducted myself properly I might have yet known some peaceful years; but a craving for excitement haunted me. I sought out some of my old companions, joined a Chartist association, took to habits of poaching—and this has been the end of it.”

“What became of the boy who was left to your care?” inquired Lewis. Hardy uttered a low groan.

“That is another sin I have to answer for,” he said. “I never liked the child—I doubted whether it was mine, and the sight of it recalled the memory of my wrongs; accordingly, I treated the boy harshly, and he repaid me by sullen disobedience; and yet there should have been sympathy between us. He was brave even to rashness, and copied my vices with an aptitude which proved his power of acquiring better things. By the time he was thirteen he could set a

snare, hit a bird on the wing, thrash any boy of his own weight, and alas ! drink, game, and swear as well as I could myself. One night I had been drinking he angered me, and in my rage I struck him. For a moment he looked as if he would return the blow; but the folly of such an attempt seemed to occur to him, and he glanced towards a knife which lay on the table; then his sister threw her arms round him, and he refrained. He waited till she had gone to bed, sitting sulkily without speaking. When we were alone he looked up and asked me abruptly, 'Father, are you sorry that you struck me that blow?' There was something in the boy's manner that appealed to my better feelings, and I was half inclined to own myself wrong, but a false shame prevented me, and I angrily replied 'that I would repeat the blow if he gave me any more of his impertinence.' He looked sternly at me, and muttering, 'That you shall never do,' quitted the room. From that day to this I have never seen him. My poor Jane, who was dotingly fond of him, was broken-hearted at his loss. She told me he often threatened to run away when I had treated him harshly, and that his intention was to go to sea. I have no doubt he contrived to put it into execution. Perhaps if her brother had remained with her the poor girl might not have left her home so readily. God help me, my sins have brought their own punishment !"

An attack of faintness here overpowered him, of so severe a character that Lewis thought it advisable to summon assistance. When Hardy had in some degree recovered, Lewis, on consulting his watch, found that he must return without further delay; he therefore prepared to depart, bidding Hardy farewell, and promising to see him again on the following day. The dying man shook his head.

"There will be no to-morrow for me in this world," he said; then pressing Lewis's hand, he added, "God bless you, Mr. Arundel; you have done me more good by your kind words than your sword has done me evil; nay, even for my death I thank you; for had I lived on as I was I should only have added crime to crime. You will remember your promise about poor Jane?"

Lewis repeated his willingness to do all in his power to carry out the dying man's wishes; and Hardy added, "It may be that the poor boy I told you of is still alive. If he should ever return, I should like him to know that I have often grieved for my bad conduct to him. I have left a letter for you with the clergyman in case I had not seen you," he continued; "it only contains the request I have now made, and one or two other particulars of less consequence; he will give it to you when I am gone." He again pressed Lewis's hand feebly, and closing his eyes, lay more dead than alive.

As Lewis quitted the room the surgeon met him and informed him that it was not probable Hardy would survive through the night, but promised that every attention should be bestowed upon him. Lewis's thoughts, as he rode back to Broadhurst, naturally ran upon the history of sin and shame and sorrow to which he had just listened, and he could not but wonder for what purpose a frank, generous nature, such as Hardy had originally possessed, should have been so severely tried. A like question may have

occurred to many of us, and we may have felt that the safest course is to look upon such things as mysteries to be regarded by the twilight of a patient faith, which waits trustfully till all that now seems dark shall be made clear in the glorious brightness of the perfect day.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONTAINS A PARADOX—LEWIS, WHEN LEAST RESIGNED, DISPLAYS THE VIRTUE OF RESIGNATION.

ON the morning after his second visit to Hardy, Lewis received a packet from the hospital chaplain enclosing the letter of which the dying man had spoken, together with a note containing the information that Hardy had breathed his last about two hours before day-break. The chaplain had seen him, and judged him to be in a fitting state of mind to receive the last consolations of religion. After partaking of the Holy Communion he had fallen into a state of unconsciousness, and died without any return of pain. Lewis opened Hardy's letter: it merely contained a repetition of the request in regard to his unfortunate daughter, together with a reference to one of his associates, in whose possession was a packet containing his father-in-law's will and other papers, all of which he begged Lewis to take charge of and examine at his leisure; he also gave a clue by which Miss Grant's watch and trinkets might be recovered, and expressed his deep penitence for that robbery, as well as for his other crimes. As Lewis perused this letter, he for the first time became more fully aware of the embarrassing situation in which he had placed himself by his promise to Hardy. How was he to discover Lord Bellefield's victim? how endeavour to reclaim her? After a few minutes' thought his determination was taken. General Grant had announced that morning the fact that Lord Bellefield, having accepted an invitation to Broadhurst, might be expected in the course of the following day; Lewis therefore resolved to address a letter to his lordship, to be given him on his arrival, detailing such portions of Hardy's confession as related to his daughter, and the promise which he had been thereby induced to make to the dying poacher; adding that if Lord Bellefield would afford him the information necessary to enable him to carry out her father's wishes, and would pledge his word of honour to avoid her for the future, he should not attempt to give publicity to the matter, but that in the event of his refusal he should feel it his duty to make General Grant acquainted with the whole affair.

In pursuance of the system he had laid down for himself, Lewis avoided Annie's society as much as was possible; a line of conduct which she soon appeared to observe, and at first to wonder at. The arrival of Lord Bellefield, however, and her knowledge of Lewis's feelings towards him, afforded her an imaginary clue to the young

tutor's altered demeanour; still, the change annoyed and pained her more than she chose to acknowledge even to her own heart. Lord Bellefield was all amiability; he had visited Italy, and brought back innumerable anecdotes of the domestic felicity of his brother Charles, whose wife he reported to be a model to her sex. His accounts of Charles's prodigious business efforts, varied by occasional lapses into the *dolce far niente* of dandyism, were amusing in the extreme. Annie was forced to own that her cousin appeared greatly improved, and yet her repugnance to a renewal of the engagement seemed daily to increase. General Grant, however, by no means sympathised with this caprice, as he considered it, and was only restrained from some violent manifestation of domestic despotism by his confidence in his own authority, and in the certainty of Annie's obedience whenever he might see fit to demand it. Lewis wrote the letter to Lord Bellefield, and having ascertained that it had reached him safely, waited patiently for an answer. Several days elapsed without his receiving one, and he was debating what step he should next take, when, as he was pacing up and down a shrubbery walk, wrapped in meditation, he suddenly met Lord Bellefield face to face. Determining not to lose an opportunity, he raised his hat, and bowing slightly, began—

"This meeting is fortunate, as I am anxious to ask your lordship a question. Have you not received a letter from me?"

"I have, sir," was the haughty and concise reply.

"It is customary between gentlemen to acknowledge the receipt of a letter," urged Lewis, "more particularly when, as in this instance, the writer has pledged himself to act according to the tenor of the answer."

"I scarcely see how your observation applies to the present case," was the insolent rejoinder. "In regard to your letter, I have treated it with the silent contempt it merited."

Lewis's brow flushed; controlling the angry impulse, however, he said calmly, "Your lordship cannot irritate me by such insinuations—you are aware of the alternative when you refuse to answer my letter?"

"I am, sir; you are welcome to take any course you please: I scorn your false accusations, and leave you to do your worst."

"In that case we understand each other," was the stern reply, and again raising his hat, Lewis passed on.

After this brief conversation he lost no time in obtaining a private interview with General Grant; scarcely, however, had he begun his statement when the General interrupted him by observing—

"I need not trouble you to proceed, Mr. Arundel; I am in possession of all the facts you are about to detail—Lord Bellefield has given me a full explanation of the matter, and I can assure you that you are labouring under an erroneous impression. The main facts of the story are, I am sorry to say, true; but the chief actor in the affair was a rascally valet of Lord Bellefield's, who assumed his master's name and apparel in order to accomplish his nefarious designs."

"But I myself witnessed an interview between Lord Bellefield and the poor girl on the morning after the ball," returned Lewis in surprise;

"I should not have brought such a charge on insufficient grounds, believe me."

"Your zeal, sir," replied the General—"for I am willing to attribute the step you have taken solely to misdirected zeal—has assuredly led you into error. Lord Bellefield, who seems by some means aware of this idea of yours——"

"I mentioned the fact that I had seen him in a letter which I addressed to him on the subject," interrupted Lewis. "It is only fair when you accuse a man of any fault to explain the grounds on which you believe him to have committed it."

"Quite right, sir, quite right," rejoined the General with an approving nod; "it is owing to the fair and manly way in which you have stated this matter that Lord Bellefield has been enabled to clear himself to my entire satisfaction. In regard to the interview to which you refer, he has recalled to me the fact that he spent the morning in question almost entirely in my company; we were engaged upon matters connected with the approaching election—you must therefore have mistaken the identity of the person you imagined to be him."

"I am not apt to make such mistakes," replied Lewis dryly, feeling convinced that the story was a clever fabrication from beginning to end, while, at the same time, he was becoming aware that for him to prove it to be so would be next to impossible.

"Nevertheless, you must have done so in this instance," resumed General Grant; "but the mistake is easily to be accounted for. Lord Bellefield tells me that in order more safely to carry on his schemes, this rascally valet used to disguise himself so as to resemble his master as much as possible, even wearing false moustachios to increase the likeness; the fact of his having deceived you proves how successfully the fellow had contrived his disguise."

While the General was speaking, Lewis hastily ran over in his mind all the evidence he possessed to prove Lord Bellefield's guilt; and though he still felt as deeply convinced as he had ever been that in his first impression he had not erred, yet so skilfully had this story of the valet been adapted to suit the circumstances of the case that it appeared impossible to undeceive a man whose habits of mind were so obstinate as those of General Grant. His first introduction to the girl after the glove affair in the ice-room, although it carried conviction to his own mind, proved nothing, save that having witnessed a quarrel between two gentlemen, she was naturally enough alarmed as to the probable consequences to which it might lead. Again, in his second interview she might have been herself deceived by the valet's representations into believing him to be Lord Bellefield, or, as she said, Mr. Leicester, his brother; or again, it was still more probable that she had been in her lover's confidence, and striving to mystify and deceive Lewis. Hardy might have been aware of other facts, but his mistake in regard to Lewis proved that his information was not to be relied on. All this Lewis saw at a glance; and seeing, felt more annoyed and embarrassed than he could express.

"Time will prove the truth," he said; "I cannot believe in Lord Bellefield's innocence, but I am unable, at the present moment, to

adduce any facts which might not bear the interpretation he has chosen to put upon them, and can only express my sorrow at having annoyed you, sir, by making a charge which I have failed to substantiate."

"You annoy me more, Mr. Arundel, by refusing to be convinced by evidence which, after having given the matter my fullest attention, has sufficed to satisfy me. I can only imagine that in this matter private pique has warped your usually clear judgment; perhaps, after a little cool reflection, you may be induced to take a more charitable view of the affair."

So saying, the General stalked out of the room with a majestic port, as of an offended lion, leaving Lewis in a frame of mind the reverse of seraphic. But his trials for that morning were not yet at an end. Annie Grant had brooded over the young tutor's gloomy looks and altered demeanour till she had made herself quite unhappy, when the idea occurred to her that she herself might be to blame. Since the last German lesson, to which allusion has been made, she had felt an instinctive dread of sounding the depth of her own feelings, or of allowing any one else, and much more Lewis, to perceive them. But it now struck her that in avoiding one extreme she had fallen into the other, and that Lewis might conceive the alteration in her manner to be owing to Lord Bellefield's influence. This notion having once struck her, was so inconceivably painful that she determined to avail herself of the first opportunity of inquiring to what cause Lewis's estrangement might be attributed; and if she found it had been produced by any supposed coolness on her part, she resolved to explain away such impression, and as she herself would have termed it, "make friends" again. Pondering these thoughts, she entered the library by a door communicating with the garden; in her hand she carried a bunch of roses, which she had just gathered, and hanging from her arm was her garden bonnet, which she had converted for the occasion into an extempore basket, also filled with roses; her golden ringlets, scared from their propriety by the wind, hung in picturesque disorder about her face and neck; the alarm she had lately undergone had rendered her somewhat paler than ordinary, and her delicate features were characterised by an unusually pensive expression. She entered so quietly, that Lewis, who, buried in thought, was seated at the table, his head resting on his hands, did not perceive her presence until, in a soft, low voice, she uttered his name. At the moment she spoke he was thinking of her—striving in vain to banish her image, which haunted his imagination like some restless ghost—trying to *think down* the temptation which was hourly becoming too strong for him; and when the sound of her voice reached him, and looking up with a start he saw her standing by him in the power of her dazzling beauty, it seemed as though the phantom of his imagination had suddenly assumed a bodily shape to tempt him beyond all power of resistance. Something of all this must have appeared in the expression of his features, for Annie began, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Arundel, I had no idea of startling you; I fancied you had heard me enter—but you look pale and tremble, surely you are not ill?"

"Oh, no!" he replied, forcing a smile, "it is nothing; a slight giddiness which will pass away in a moment."

As he spoke, however, he pressed his hand to his brow, which throbbed as though it would burst. Annie became alarmed, and placing her flowers on the table, she drew nearer to him, saying—

“I am sure there is something the matter; you are either ill or unhappy; you have received some bad news of your mother, or dear Rose, is it not so?”

“Indeed you are mistaken,” returned Lewis, making an effort to rouse himself; “I was buried in thought, and your sudden entrance startled me. I am not usually given to such freaks, but since our nocturnal adventure I must confess to having become practically convinced of the existence of nerves. I must have lost more blood from this cut in the wrist than I was at first aware of.”

“Ah! that dreadful night!” exclaimed Annie, clasping her hands and turning pale at the recollection; “I shall never forget all I went through on that night if I live to be a hundred. I had been asleep for an hour or more, when I suddenly woke and saw Lisette standing by my bedside pale and trembling; as soon as she could find voice to speak she told me there were robbers in the house, and that we should all be murdered. My first idea was that you would be able to save us, and I told her to go and arouse you instantly; I soon found, however, she was too much alarmed to go alone, so I rose and accompanied her. The rest you know; but you can never know the agony of mind I suffered after you had left me: first, the dreadful interval of suspense before the robbers came upstairs, and then the fearful sounds of the conflict. I felt sure they would kill you, and I thought how wickedly selfish I had been to allow you to stay there and meet them, when, but for me, you might have escaped. I felt as if I had condemned you to death, and that I could never—never be happy again. Oh! it was too horrible!” and carried away by the recollections she had called up, Annie sank into a chair and covered her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out some painful object.

And Lewis, what had been his feelings, as, hurried on by the interest of her subject, Annie had thus unconsciously afforded him a glimpse into the inmost recesses of her heart? When she mentioned that her impulse on the first alarm of danger had been to rely on his protection, his dark eyes beamed with an inexpressible tenderness; but as she proceeded, and her artless confession proved that in the moment of peril her fears were not for herself but for him, his emotions became uncontrollable, and the volcano of passion, whose secret fires had already begun to prey upon his very life-springs, threatened to burst forth and bear down all before it. Already he had half risen from his seat; in another moment his arm would have encircled her, and the words that told of his deep, his overpowering love—the words that, once said, could never have been recalled, would have been poured forth, when, by one of those dispensations of Providence which men call Chance, his eye fell upon two persons who were pacing, arm-in-arm, along a terrace walk on the farthest side of the lawn—they were General Grant and Lord Bellefield. The revulsion of feeling was instantaneous; duty, honour, pride, all came to the rescue, and the fight was won, but the cost remained yet to reckon. Lewis,

once excited, was not a person to take half-measures; with the speed of thought, the resolution rushed upon him that while their mutual relations remained unchanged, he and Annie must never meet again. The purpose was no sooner formed than it was acted upon. Turning to his companion, who, engrossed by her own feelings, had remained wholly unconscious of the struggle that had been proceeding in Lewis's breast, he said in a calm, mournful voice, "Although I have not exactly received evil tidings, yet circumstances have occurred which require my presence elsewhere, and I am now about to ask your father's permission to leave Broadhurst; this will, therefore, probably be the last time I shall see you."

"Until you return," interrupted Annie eagerly.

A bitter smile flitted across Lewis's mouth as he replied, "Yes, *until I return!* I will therefore bid you good-bye at once." He paused, and his eye fell upon a rose-bud she was unconsciously playing with. "I have a fancy for that flower," he said; "will you give it to me?"

"Nay, let me find you a better one," was the reply; "this is blighted."

"For which reason I prefer it to any other; you know I have odd fancies sometimes." He took the bud from her, fixed it in his button-hole, then resumed, "I must now seek the General—good-bye!"

Annie regarded him with a pleading glance, as though she would fain learn more; but reading in the stern resolution of his countenance the inutility of further questioning, held out her hand in silence; he took it, clasped it in his own, then, yielding to an irresistible impulse, pressed it hurriedly to his lips, and was gone.

General Grant was naturally by no means of a suspicious disposition; the position in which he was placed giving him irresponsible authority over nearly every person with whom he came in contact, had rendered him pompous and arbitrary; but although not a man of enlarged mind, or possessing much delicacy of perception, he was actuated by a strong principle of justice. This attribute imparted a degree of frankness and generosity to his character, which, despite occasional displays of obstinacy or prejudice, caused him to be very generally respected, and in some instances beloved. To a mind of this nature there can be nothing more vexatious or annoying than to have its preconceived opinions of a person shaken by artful insinuations, which will require long and patient investigation to verify or disprove. In such a state of mind as we have described, however, did Lord Bellefield leave General Grant when, after pacing up and down the memorable terrace walk which had been the scene of De Grandeville's ill-judged confidence to Charley Leicester, he at length quitted him. The subject of their conversation had been the character of Lewis Arundel; and Lord Bellefield had taken advantage of the General's momentary irritation against the young tutor to suggest, rather than positively to make, the following accusation:—He first hinted that the General had been deceived by Lewis's fair seeming, to adopt a wrong view of his disposition, and that, instead of the chivalrous, high-spirited, honourable being he imagined him, he was

in fact an artful and accomplished hypocrite. He then proceeded to state that he had long seen this, and even suspected the object of his lengthened residence at Broadhurst, nay, possibly of his original entrance into that family; this object he declared to be a systematic design to ensnare the affections of the General's daughter, probably relying on his good looks and insinuating manner to enable him to inveigle her into a runaway marriage. "Hence," he observed, "his animosity towards me; hence his unsuccessful attempts to blacken my character, first in regard to poor Mellerton's affair, and now concerning the poacher's daughter. If he could once have succeeded in producing a quarrel between us, he would have had a clear field to himself. I was unwilling to disturb you by telling you this before, sir," he continued. "I felt perfect confidence in my cousin Annie's affection; and as to the young fellow himself, he was of course quite beneath my notice; but Annie, after all, is a mere girl, and naturally inexperienced in the ways of the world. Since the hint you threw out, advising me to proceed with gentleness, because she appeared to have some girlish scruples as to the renewal of the engagement, I have felt it was incumbent on me to put you on your guard without delay. The man is handsome—chance has given him many opportunities of interesting a romantic girl, and it must be confessed our dear Annie has a spice of romance about her."

"I do not think so, sir," interrupted the General snappishly; "none of the Grants ever were romantic. I am not romantic myself, and I do not believe a daughter of mine would forget her duty, her position, in fact her relationship to me, so far as to indulge in romance in regard to a private tutor. Moreover, I believe Mr. Arundel to be a highly honourable young man; he is the son of a soldier and a gentleman, and I cannot but consider that you wrong him by your suspicions; at the same time, I promise you the matter shall be looked into, the engagement between my daughter and yourself formally renewed, and the moment she is of age, it is my wish that the marriage should take place. It is desirable for your sake as well as for hers. I trust when you become a married man to see you give up racing, and take more interest in public business. It is, as you are aware, my intention to settle Broadhurst upon your second son; it will therefore behove you to distinguish yourself as one in whom the families of Leicester and Grant are united."

So saying, the General relapsed into a solemn silence, and Lord Bellefield, inly raging at the tone of authority which his future father-in-law saw fit to assume towards him, quitted him, leaving the poison he had instilled into his mind to work; and it did work, for although he was disinclined in the highest degree to admit the truth of his intended son-in-law's insinuations against Lewis, yet he could not banish them from his mind. A thousand little circumstances came to his recollection of which at the moment he had thought nothing, but which now appeared to favour Lord Bellefield's view of the case; and for the first time his own imprudence in throwing so constantly together two young people in every way calculated to attract each other occurred to him, and he paced the terrace walk in a frame of mind by

no means customary to that gallant officer—viz., one of self-reprobation. While thus pondering, at a sudden turn in the walk the object of his thoughts appeared before him, looking so tall, dark, and cold, as, with his arms folded across his breast, he stood statue-like beneath the shadow of an old yew-tree, that the General started as though he had seen a ghost. If any such notion occurred to him, however, the illusion was soon dissipated, for Lewis, raising his hat, advanced towards him and said—

“I have sought you, General Grant, to thank you for all the generous courtesy I have received at your hands, and to tell you that it is impossible for me longer to continue a member of your household.”

As Lewis spoke these words calmly and respectfully, the General's face assumed an expression of surprise and dismay most wonderful to behold.

“What!” he exclaimed, “resign your appointment as tutor to my ward! quit Sir Walter before you have completed his education, when your system has been so surprisingly successful, too! Oh, the thing is impossible, I cannot hear of it.”

A look of sorrow passed across Lewis's features as the General mentioned Walter, but he replied with the same calm, respectful, but determined manner, which, to one who knew him well, would have proved that he was acting in accordance with some resolve that he had formed upon principle, and to which he would adhere inflexibly.

“I am grieved to be obliged to relinquish my task unfinished,” he said, “more especially since the interest I have long felt in my poor pupil has rendered duties which others might consider irksome a labour of love to me. I trust, however, that I have been enabled so far to develop poor Walter's intellects that any person who will treat him judiciously and kindly (and to no other, I am sure, you would entrust him) may be able to complete all that remains to be done towards his education.”

“And pray what is your reason for this sudden determination, Mr. Arundel?” inquired the General, becoming more and more perplexed as he perceived that it would be no easy matter to alter Lewis's determination. “I presume some more advantageous prospect has been thrown open to you?”

Lewis shook his head mournfully. “You wrong me by such a supposition, sir,” he replied; “my future, as far as I can foresee it, is not a bright one, believe me.”

“Has Lord Bellefield in any way annoyed or interfered with you?” inquired the General, as a suspicion crossed his mind that his amiable future son-in-law might have taken some aggressive step against the young tutor; but Lewis again replied in the negative, adding that his reason for resigning his post was entirely of a personal nature, and that he had not come to the conclusion without due consideration.

“Really, sir,” returned the General, drawing himself up stiffly, as the suspicions instilled by Lord Bellefield suddenly flashed across his mind, “these enigmas are past my comprehension. You propose to resign at a moment's notice the conduct of my ward's education,

thereby materially injuring him, and causing me the greatest inconvenience and annoyance ; I think, therefore, you owe it to me as well as to yourself candidly to state your reason for so doing ; at all events I must be allowed to say such concealment is most unlike your usual frank and manly course of proceeding."

As the General uttered this reproach Lewis coloured, and his compressed lip and knitted brow told how deeply it affected him. When the other had ceased speaking he answered haughtily, "Your reproof may be deserved, General Grant, but it was my wish to save us both pain, which alone induced me to desire the concealment you reprobate ; your words, however, oblige me to speak openly, and cost what it may, I will do so. *I cannot remain longer beneath your roof, because I love your daughter.* Wait," he continued sternly, as with a start of horrified surprise the General seemed about to give vent to his indignation in a torrent of words, "you have forced me to speak, and must now hear me out. I well know the feelings with which you regard my mad presumption, as you consider it ; I know better even than you do the gulf which lies between your daughter and your paid dependant ; but nature recognises no such distinctions—the same God who made her good and beautiful implanted in my breast the admiration for those qualities, and I could no more exist in her presence without loving her than I could stand in the glorious sunshine without feeling its genial warmth. My love was from the beginning as hopeless as I know it to be at this moment, when I read in your lowering brow that if your frown could annihilate me, you would deem the punishment only too mild for my offence against your pride of station ; and yet I know, and you know it too, that casting aside the adventitious gifts of rank and fortune, my nature is more akin to your own than is that of the titled worldling you have selected as your future son-in-law. Before night sets in I shall have left this house for ever, and from that moment to you and yours I shall be as one dead. I may therefore say without fear of misconstruction that which I could not speak as long as I remained a member of your household. The tale that I told you regarding the poacher's child was TRUE. In the version Lord Bellefield gave of it he lied to you. He is a man of evil passions and of narrow mind, and I warn you, if you entrust your daughter's happiness to him, a time will come when you will bitterly repent it. I will next tell you why I have remained here thus long, and why I leave you now. My passion for your daughter has been the growth of months ; how I have striven against it and endeavoured to crush it out—ay, though I crushed my heart with it, none will ever know ; it is enough that I have failed, that where I fancied myself strong I have been proved weak. If I have suffered, 'tis through my own folly ; if my future appear one fathomless hell of recollection, for myself have I prepared it." He paused, drew his hand across his throbbing brow, and then continued—

"I remained here for Walter's sake, relying on my own fortitude to conceal the mental torture I endured ; I bore Lord Bellefield's sneers, and harder still, your daughter's gentle kindness, with an unmoved aspect, but at each successive trial the effort became greater, and my

strength grew less, until this morning, when in her tender woman's mercy, your daughter, reading in my face traces of the anguish which was consuming me, spoke words of kindness and sympathy, chance alone, or rather the watchful providence of God, prevented my secret from transpiring. A similar trial might recur at any moment—I have lost all confidence in my power of self-control; therefore every principle of honour and of duty bids me leave this place without delay; and this, so help me Heaven, is the whole and simple truth."

As he concluded, General Grant, whose brow had gradually relaxed during Lewis's speech, exclaimed with a degree of warmth most unusual to him, "You have behaved like a man of honour, Mr. Arundel, under what I own to have been a very great trial, and I admire and respect you for so completely justifying the favourable opinion I have formed of you; I wish—that is, I could wish if the thing were not impossible—but it is useless to talk in this way—you must, as you wisely perceive, leave Broadhurst immediately. I will take upon me to find some reason to account for your abrupt departure, but you will carry with you my esteem and gratitude, and in whatever career you may think fit to adopt you may rely upon my willingness to assist you to the uttermost. May I inquire your future plans?"

"I have formed no plans," returned Lewis hurriedly. "When I leave your house my only prospect is to begin life anew, with every hope that renders life endurable shut out from me for ever—I am grateful for your offers, but must decline them. Henceforward I am likely to do little credit to any one's patronage, and must strive with existence alone and single-handed. And now, ere I leave you, let me again thank you for the courtesy you have uniformly shown me—I expected justice at your hands, you have added kindness also: we shall probably never meet again, but the chances of life are strange, and should it ever be in my power to return your benefits, you will not find me forgetful."

He raised his hat as he spoke, and turned to depart. General Grant advanced as if he would detain him, but checking himself, he muttered—

"You shall hear from me—I will write to you at your banker's;" and Lewis bowed and left him.

CHAPTER L.

SHOWS HOW LEWIS CAME TO A "DOGGED" DETERMINATION, AND WAS MADE THE SHUTTLECOCK OF FATE.

"WALTER, I am going to leave you," observed Lewis in a quiet, gentle voice.

Walter, who was seated on a low stool playing with Faust, continued his amusement, merely replying carelessly, "Are you?"

Lewis knew from the nature of the answer that the sound but not the sense of his communication had reached his poor pupil's understanding, and yet the apparent indifference of the remark pained him;

it seemed as if all he loved were falling away from him. He had determined that it would be better for Walter not to be told at once that he was leaving never to return, but to allow the truth gradually to dawn upon him, after he had practically tested his ability to do without him; still he was anxious in some degree to prepare the poor boy's mind to support the severe grief which he feared his absence would occasion him. Accordingly he returned to the attack.

"Look at me, Walter," he said. Having caught his eye, he continued, "You did not understand me, dear boy; I am going away—going to leave you for a long time."

"Ay? how long a time? a week?" inquired Walter.

"A great many weeks," returned Lewis gravely, "and you must be very good all the time, and do everything as you know I should wish you to do it if I were here: do you understand me, and will you try?"

Walter nodded assent, paused, and then asked, "What will Faust do; may he stay with me?"

Lewis did not answer. Give up Faust, the only thing that he had left to love him! could he make this sacrifice?

"Because, if he may stay, I shall feel sure you will come back some time or other; nobody can leave Faust and not come and see him again—at least nobody who knows him and loves him as well as you and I do," pleaded Walter, throwing his arm round the dog's neck.

I am inflicting injury enough on the poor boy as it is, reflected Lewis sorrowfully; I must not deny him this thing, which he has set his heart upon. Well, it only makes the sacrifice the more complete. "Walter, will you be happy if I leave Faust with you?" he inquired gently.

"Oh, yes!" was the joyful reply, "quite happy till you come again."

"Then he shall stay," resumed Lewis; "remember he is your dog, I give him to you."

"Yes, he is my dog," repeated Walter gleefully; "only till you come back again though, you know," he added, gazing wistfully at Lewis.

Poor Lewis! his heart was full, he could not trust himself to speak; this little incident had appealed to the affectionate side of his nature, and all but unmanned him. He approached Walter, swept back the soft, fair hair from his forehead, and imprinted a kiss on it, patted Faust's shaggy head, and turning away abruptly, quitted the room. Ere nightfall he had completed the few arrangements which his sudden departure rendered necessary, and taking with him only a small travelling valise which he slung across his shoulders, he waited till the shades of evening had set in, and leaving directions with his ally Robert, now invested with all the dignity and privileges of butlerhood, in regard to his luggage, which he desired might be forwarded to a certain address in London, he quitted Broadhurst alone and on foot.

The town of H—— was situated about ten miles from the park gates of Broadhurst, and thither did Lewis direct his steps. He paced along mechanically, with a dull, heavy tread, as unlike his usual free elastic

bounding step as possible; he kept his eyes fixed on the road before him, neither glancing to the right nor the left, and all his actions appeared like those of one moving in a dream. The night was dry and warm, and when Lewis had proceeded about six miles on his way the moon came out and bathed hill and valley in a flood of silvery light. Suddenly he paused, as the ruins of a picturesque old abbey, thrown out in bold relief by a dark background of trees, became visible at a turning of the road, and fixing his eyes on the time-worn structure, gazed long and earnestly; then a new idea seemed to strike him, and springing over a gate, he ascended with vigorous strides the green hill-side on which the ruin was situated. Passing beneath crumbling arches and over the fallen stone-work covering old graves of a forgotten generation, he reached a portion of the building which seemed in somewhat better repair than the remainder. Having reached the upper end of the chancel, he paused, and leaning his back against the broken shaft of a pillar which had supported one of the arches, gave way to the painful recollections which the place excited. The last time he had visited that spot, Annie Grant had stood by his side, and as he taught her how the mystic piety of our forefathers had striven to symbolise the truths of Christianity in the cruciform cathedral, with its vaulted arches and heaven-aspiring pinnacles, her soft blue eyes had looked into his face with an expression of the respectful love we feel towards one whom we deem better and wiser than ourselves. And now how cruel was the contrast—how completely and painfully alone he felt. Then he longed (who has not at some crisis of the inner-life?) so earnestly that he almost fancied he possessed the power to separate mind and matter, and flying in the spirit to her he loved, to learn whether she thought of him and grieved for his absence. Pursuing the idea, he came to speculate on many things. Had they yet told her he would not return? What reason would the General assign for such an abrupt departure? Would she believe his account, or would her heart divine the true cause? And if it did, would she pity him?—strongest proof of love—he could bear the idea of *her* pity.

Poor Lewis! perhaps his greatest trial was this, that at the very moment when he gave her up for ever, a latent sense of power told him that he could have won her; this was indeed the "sorrow's crown of sorrow"—the bitterness of more than self-renunciation, for Annie, too, might be rendered unhappy by his act. Then the future, the blank, fearful future—what lay in store for him there? "Fresh sorrow—no" (and he smiled as men on the rack have smiled when the tormentors have outwitted themselves, and the numbness of approaching death has produced insensibility to pain and robbed them of their victim), "he was dead alike to sorrow as to joy;" but at the moment, as if to prove him weak even in the *vis inertiae* of despair, the possibility of Annie's union with Lord Bellefield came before him like some hideous phantom, and he was forced to own that there might be depths of misery awaiting him greater than he had yet proved. And thus recalling the past and imagining the future, he afflicted himself with griefs real and visionary, till the moonbeams grew paler and altogether fled, and the stars disappeared one by one, and the red glow of the

eastern sky proclaimed the coming day, and the sun arose glorious in his majesty, and his earliest rays poured through the broken roof and fell in a stream of golden light upon the ruined altar; then for the first time that night Lewis thought of Rose, and of what her advice would have been had she known of his unhappiness; and prostrating himself upon the altar-step, he prayed long and fervently.

The reflection that when our sorrow has become too heavy for us to bear there is One mighty to save, Himself in His earthly career a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," who will strengthen us to support them, must console the deepest mental anguish; and we do not believe that any man has ever prayed truly and earnestly without receiving comfort from so doing. For the very act recognises a belief in the existence and faith in the benevolence of a Being, all powerful alike to avert the evil we dread, and to bestow upon us the good we desire. And Lewis, when he arose from his knees, did so refreshed in spirit, and better fitted to do or to suffer, as he might be required by the changes and chances of that portion of *THE RAILROAD OF LIFE* over which he had yet to pass.

He reached the town of H— as the inhabitants, aroused from their slumbers, were drowsily opening the shop-windows, and making his way to a small, unobtrusive inn, breakfasted. Having ascertained at what hour the last coach passed through for London, he left his valise under the care of the waiter, and passing along several dirty, narrow streets, at length reached a court, in one of the poorest and most wretched quarters of the town. Here, after some trouble and a disagreeable amount of threatening glances from sundry suspicious-looking characters, he succeeded in discovering the abode of a certain Jerry Sullivan. This worthy, having satisfied himself that Lewis was not a member of the detective police, graciously accorded him an interview, wherein Lewis explained to him that, in consequence of a communication made to him by Hardy on his death-bed, he was anxious to investigate the contents of a packet left in possession of his (Sullivan's) maternal ancestor. This fact, Mr. Sullivan, whose brogue was considerably stronger than his regard for truth, immediately saw fit to deny, and was proceeding to lament the death of his mother, which he averred had taken place that day fortnight, when he was interrupted by the inopportune entrance of the lady in question, who appeared by no means dead, but in a very lively state of virtuous indignation. She immediately silenced her mendacious offspring, and beckoning Lewis into a kind of den which she inhabited, shut the door, and then questioned and cross-questioned him as to his connection with Hardy. Having satisfied herself, by perusing Hardy's letter, that Lewis was no impostor, she unlocked an old trunk, whence she produced a bundle of papers and a sheet of parchment.

"There," she said, "that's the will he spoke of, poor fellow, and them's the letters—and I only hope as you'll be able to find the unfortunate childr'n, and that they will come into the money all right—it's nigh £100 a year, I'm told."

"Have you any idea whether Hardy had at all traced his daughter since she left him?" inquired Lewis.



LEWIS IN THE RUINED ABBEY.

"No; he heard nothink of her, poor chap; he was a'most broken-hearted about her, and that's what drove him to the courses he took to. He worn't a reg'lar prig, bless yer; he did a little in the poarching line wiles, but only for the sake o' the sport, same as you gents—he wor above them things altogether. But I knows more than he did about the gal: there were a young 'ooman here a week ago as had seen her in London, dressed out and riding about in a coach like a lady; but that wor soon arter she fust went off with the young swell, and wor a kind of new toy like."

"And did not the girl know anything of her since?" inquired Lewis.

"Well, she know'd this much, that when the young lord went abroad with his sister he made his valet stop behind and foller him in a few days with Jane Hardy, arter which she in course lost sight of her; but she thinks he's left her over in them furring parts."

"Them furring parts—that must mean Italy," thought Lewis; and finding the old woman had told him all she knew on the subject, he thanked her for her information, secured the papers about his person, and was preparing to depart, when his companion stopped him, and summoning Jerry, whose main, if not only, virtue appeared to consist in filial obedience, caused him to escort the "young gent" beyond the purlieus of the miserable alley in which their abode was situated.

The visit had taken longer than Lewis had expected; and on his return to the inn he found the coach would pass through in about half-an-hour. Snatching a hasty meal, he placed the papers in his valise, and in a few minutes was on his road to London. The coach stopped at an inn in Holborn, and here Lewis, who, in his present state of mind, was anxious to avoid a meeting with any of his friends, Frere himself not excepted, determined for the next few days to take up his abode. Accordingly, he engaged a sitting-room and bedroom, which, for the sake of privacy and cheapness, were situated at the back of the house, at an altitude little inferior to that of the neighbouring chimney-pots. Having established himself in this uninviting residence, he sat down to try and arrange some plan for the future. He felt that he ought to write to Rose and his mother and acquaint them with his altered destiny; but to do so involved an explanation which he shrank from attempting. He tried to read, but the only book at hand was a volume of Schiller, and with a sickening feeling of despair he threw it from him. At length he bethought him of Hardy's papers, and untying the string that bound them, he spread them on the table before him. The will, which he first examined, appeared formally drawn up, signed, and attested. The testator left property worth, as far as Lewis could make out, about £100 a year to Jane and Miles Hardy. Laying this aside, he turned over a mass of smaller papers, old game certificates, receipts for rent, and among others a note carefully preserved, endorsed in a bold free hand, "The first letter I ever received from Harriet." It was an invitation, coquettishly worded, asking Hardy to join a party to the — races, written by her who had sinned so deeply, and had long since gone to give account of the misery she had caused and suffered. Lewis could

not look on this record of an affection which even the greatest wrong woman can do to man had been unable wholly to destroy, without the deepest commiseration.

Laying the note carefully aside, he took up the bundle of old letters, and selecting one which was partially opened, glanced carelessly at its contents. Why does he start and change colour as his eye falls upon the handwriting? Why press his hand to his burning brow as the momentary doubt crosses his mind whether all the mental anguish he has lately suffered can have unsettled his brain, or whether that which he beholds is indeed reality? Eagerly does he devour the contents of the epistle, eagerly does he unfold letter after letter till not one of the packet remains unperused. Again, sitting late into the night, does he read and re-read them, then folding them carefully, paces up and down the room, chafing at the lazy hours that drag their weary length and oppose a barrier between his wishes and the coming day, when he may act and resolve doubt into certainty. For the whole of that night, the second during which he had never closed an eyelid, did he measure with restless steps the narrow limits of the apartment. Leaving his breakfast untasted, he hurried, at the earliest business hour, to the chambers of the family solicitor; for half the morning did they remain closeted together—together did they seek the office (yclept by Richard Frere a den of thieves) of Messrs. Jones & Levi, the lawyers who, as the reader may remember, addressed a mysterious letter to Lewis soon after his first arrival at Broadhurst. Carefully did the astute man of law examine and compare papers, and sift evidence, and draw out the crafty rogues with whom he had to deal; and when he had gained all the information he required, steadily and cautiously did he examine the affair in all its bearings; nor was it till he had thoroughly made himself master of the subject that he approached Lewis, and shaking him heartily by the hand, exclaimed, "Well, my dear sir, as far as one can judge in this early stage of the proceedings, I think you have a very good case; and I beg to congratulate you on the prospect before you."

And what, then, was this prospect, at the mere possibility of which Lewis's eye sparkled and his cheek glowed with the brightness of renewed hope? It was the prospect of inheriting an ancient and honourable name, of gaining a position which would render him not only equal but superior in rank to Annie Grant, and of possessing an income beside which Lord Bellefield's fortune, impoverished by the turf and the gaming-table, sank into comparative insignificance. One short year more for him to prove his right before the eyes of men, and then, if Annie were but true to her own heart, he would boldly enter the lists against his rival, and in love or hate Lord Bellefield should find that he had met his match. Well might his step be proud and his bearing joyous and elated, for in twelve hours the whole aspect of life had become changed to him: such shuttlecocks are we in the hands of Fate, as unthinking men term the mysterious ordinances of the Omnipotent.

Had he known the contents of a letter which was even then awaiting him at his banker's, his new-found joy might have been lessened.

CHAPTER LI.

CONTAINS MUCH SORROW, AND PREPARES THE WAY FOR MORE.

THE letter to which reference was made at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, and which Lewis received on the day following that on which he visited Mr. Coke, the family solicitor, proved to be from General Grant, and ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—for in that light I must ever consider you, after the many important services you have rendered me,—I am anxious to lose no time in forwarding to your account, at Messrs. —, your salary for the year beginning May 18—; and as you have been compelled by honourable feeling to throw up your appointment so unexpectedly, and may not be fortunate enough to meet immediately with another suited to your wishes, you will, I feel sure, allow me, as some small testimony of the high esteem in which I hold you, to enclose a cheque for £500 instead of £300. I shall feel hurt if you refuse to accept this token of my regard.”

“Two hundred pounds for giving up his daughter! he would scarcely have bought me off so cheap if I had looked at the matter in a pecuniary point of view,” was Lewis’s ironical comment, as with an inward resolution instantly to return the £200 he continued to peruse the letter.

“You will be glad to hear that Walter bears your absence wonderfully well; your kind consideration in leaving him the dog has produced a very good effect, as the animal serves to amuse him. We have not as yet been able to disabuse him of the notion that you will return, although I have impressed upon my daughter, who appears to possess more influence with him than any other member of the family, the necessity for so doing. The mention of my daughter’s name leads me for the last time to touch upon a subject which I can conceive may be painful even to your well-disciplined mind. During an interview which I held with her yesterday, she expressed her readiness to be guided entirely by my wishes. With her full concurrence, the engagement to Lord Bellefield was formally renewed, and the marriage is to take place as soon as she comes of age. I may add that, as far as I am able to judge upon so delicate a point, I do not doubt that her intended bridegroom possesses her entire affection. You will not think me unnecessarily communicative, or careless of your feelings, in mentioning these facts; but I conceive the knowledge of them may tend sooner to restore your mind to its usually healthy tone. Should you still be in England after my daughter’s marriage, I shall have much pleasure in seeing you either at Broadhurst or in Park Crescent. Convey my remembrances to Mrs. and Miss Arundel,

“And believe me to remain, yours sincerely and faithfully,

“ARCHIBALD GRANT.”

Lewis read the letter steadily to the end. With trembling lips and starting eyeballs did he re-peruse it; he could not avert his gaze, it

appeared to possess a species of horrible fascination for him; he felt as if his brain would burst, as if his reason were failing him. Annie loving Lord Bellefield, and allowing the engagement to be formally renewed—oh, it was impossible! he *must* be going mad—an evil which his worst fears pointed at only as a remote possibility, when time should have effaced his image, and the influence of those around her have conquered her lingering scruples, come to pass ere the rosebud she had given him had withered on its stem. Why was it that the trial had become too great for him to bear—that his self-control had failed—was it only the intensity of his own feelings that he feared? or was it that he hoped, yet dreaded to learn, that he was beloved? Did the sacrifice that he had made consist only of his love for her, or did the belief that he was relinquishing the certainty of winning hers in return add a redoubled bitterness to his self-renunciation? were a thousand remembered words, looks, glances, realities, or the creations of his morbid fancy? He rose and paced the room, as was his wont when deeply excited. Where should he seek a clue to this mystery? could he believe—the thought flashed like lightning through his brain, like lightning, searing as it passed—could he believe that he had again been duped by a coquette? were all women false and heartless alike? could the goodness, and innocence, and purity which rendered beauty such as Annie's a link between earth and heaven be mere counterfeits, and not the angel-instincts they appeared? Did good exist at all? or was this world an initiatory hell, and the evil principle predominant? Were Annie untrue, truth itself might be but a great and specious falsehood.

From this chaos of passionate distraction a few clearer, but on that account no less painful, ideas began to evolve themselves: his new-found dream of joy had vanished; rank and fortune, valued only because they would bring him nearer to Annie, would become a tie and a burden without her—he would have none of them. For his mother and sister he would still labour; to support them was his first duty: in works which he *must* perform lay his only refuge against despair, perhaps even against madness. There was something else: some promise he made, what was it? his brain swam, he could recollect nothing clearly; hastily removing his neckcloth he plunged his head and face into a basin of cold water—this precaution in all probability saved him from a brain fever. Having partially dried his streaming locks and resumed his walk up and down the apartment, he remembered his promise to Hardy. Yes, that also was a sacred duty; the girl must be discovered, rescued from a life of infamy, separated for ever from—, and here he stopped abruptly as a new idea occurred to him—Lord Bellefield! the retribution he had vowed to exact from him! he was now free, in a position to demand it! For a moment his eyes flashed, and the fingers of his right hand involuntarily closed as if grasping a weapon, and then many conflicting thoughts crowded upon him, and the eyes sought the ground, and the fingers insensibly relaxed. If he provoked Lord Bellefield to meet him now, at this particular juncture, would not it appear as if he were actuated solely by jealousy of his more fortunate rival, as if his hope-

less passion for Annie were the cause of his animosity? This idea was especially repugnant to him for many reasons. In the first place, he had argued himself into the belief that his resentment against Lord Bellefield was a just and reasonable feeling, and that in punishing him for the unmanly insults he had heaped upon him, he was only exacting a due penalty; it was by this subtle argument alone that he could regard the act he contemplated as at all a justifiable one. Again, he considered that it would be completely beneath him to be jealous of Lord Bellefield. If Annie were able to love such a character, she was unworthy *his* affection. Lastly, although he was himself scarcely aware of the feeling, and although a personal meeting with the object of his hatred, a contemptuous word or insolent look, would in a moment have conquered it, he felt a natural repugnance to take any step which might necessitate shedding a fellow-mortal's blood. To plan a duel *à l'outrance* as a distant possibility was one thing, to take measures coolly and deliberately to bring about such an event immediately was quite another affair. So catching at the only *grey* spot among the blackness that surrounded him, he consoled himself with the reflection that, as Annie would not be of age till the expiration of between two and three years, he might during that period contrive to learn how far her heart was likely to go with her hand in the proposed alliance, and to regulate his conduct accordingly. Shaping his plans for the present in accordance with this resolve, he wrote sundry letters (one to General Grant respectfully declining his present) more or less coherently, and then going to bed in the frame of mind of one who

“Dotes yet doubts, suspects yet fondly loves,”

must have been singularly fortunate if he enjoyed a very good night's sleep.

We must now take a retrospective glance at Broadhurst during the short space that had elapsed since Lewis quitted it, and learn how events, which caused him such bitter grief, have been brought about.

'Tis the night of Lewis's departure, and Annie Grant sits at her open window gazing pensively at the moon, which moon, by the way, was at that identical moment lighting the old abbey and shining on her lover's throbbing brow, as he stood thinking of her beside the ruined altar. Now Annie was by no means in a comfortable frame of mind; in the first place, she began more than to suspect that she was falling deeply in love, and in the second, “the thing she loved” had not exactly “died,” but what was quite as inconvenient and much more inexplicable, had suddenly “conveyed itself away” without telling her why or wherefore. Lewis and Walter had of late been in the habit of spending their evenings in the drawing-room, General Grant considering that it was desirable to accustom the latter to the forms and habits of society, but on that evening they had not made their appearance as usual; Annie had inquired of her aunt the reason of their absence. Miss Livingstone, looking like a very vicious old owl, replied “that really *she* was the last person likely to know. General Grant was doubtless well informed on the subject, but he

was always strangely, and as she thought, most unnecessarily reserved; she believed Mr. Arundel had been driven to resign his situation, and she was not at all surprised; she did not know who that could avoid it would reside in a family ordered about like a regiment of dragoons; she dared say Lord Bellefield had some broken-down blackleg ready to recommend as tutor to teach Walter gambling and horse-racing. Would Annie oblige her by looking under the sofa? she thought she saw the shadow of a man's foot against the chimney-piece; she expected they should all be murdered in their beds of a night, now the only person able to defend them was driven away. Would Annie oblige her by ringing the bell? she wished to ascertain whether Robert had remembered to load the percussion cap of his blunderbuss." Foiled in this quarter, Annie waited till Lord Bellefield was so obliging as to stroll out in pursuit of a cigar, "smoking under difficulties" being one of his most severe trials during a visit at Broadhurst. When he was gone she attacked her father with a direct inquiry as to what had become of Walter and Mr. Arundel?

"Walter was in his own study, Mr. Arundel was absent," was the reply.

"Absent," returned Annie; "why, where is he gone, papa?"

"I did not inquire Mr. Arundel's intended route, my dear; his age and character render him fully competent to regulate his own movements," was the stiff response.

Annie's lip curled: "Able to regulate his own movements!" she thought him fit to rule a universe.

"When is he coming back, papa?"

"A—ahem! not at present, my dear; that is, in fact, you may consider his absence as permanent. The reasons for his departure which he imparted to me lead me to this conclusion."

"There, I told you so—I said he had been sent away," observed Minerva snappishly.

"Madam, you have been misinformed," interposed the General with much irritation; "Mr. Arundel has not been sent away, he resigned his position as tutor to my ward of his own free will, for reasons which I considered good and sufficient."

"And what were these wonderful reasons, if one might make so bold as to ask without having one's nose snapped off one's face?" inquired Minerva, curiosity and crossness combined overcoming her habitual fear of her august nephew-in-law.

"A—really I am not accustomed to be cross-questioned in this way. A—you, madam, strangely forget our relative pos—; however, I may as well mention once for all that I have Mr. Arundel's authority for stating that his reasons for quitting Broadhurst are purely of a personal nature. And now I beg this subject may not be alluded to again; I am the last person who should be accused of driving him out of the family;" and having by this time worked himself up into a very considerable passion, in which frame of mind he was, like most other of his fellow-mortals, particularly unreasonable and incautious, he glanced furiously at poor innocent Annie and strode out of the room like an offended autocrat, as he was.

And this agreeable little scene formed the subject of Annie's reverie, as, with her golden hair hanging like a veil around her, she watched the moonbeams sleeping on the velvet turf. Why had Lewis left them so suddenly?—why, if her father knew the reason, did he refuse to reveal it; and still more strange, why should Lewis so scrupulously have concealed it from her? Then again, her father had appeared angry with her—could he suppose *she* had had anything to do with the young tutor's departure? And then an idea struck her which even there, alone, beneath the silent night, caused her face and neck to become suffused by a burning blush—could it be possible that she had betrayed herself, that Lewis had discovered her affection for him? And then she blushed yet more deeply at the plain words in which she had for the first time expressed, even to herself, her heart's secret yearnings. The idea was painful in the highest degree to a mind of such child-like purity as Annie's, and yet the more she thought of it the more probable did it appear; it would account for everything that perplexed her. If she really had been so madly imprudent, so utterly deficient in maidenly reserve, as to allow Lewis to perceive the depth of her regard for him, his honourable feeling would instantly oblige him to leave the family, and no doubt her father's cross-questioning had in some degree elicited from him the truth. Oh! what deep humiliation—regard it in whatever light she would, what bitter, endless misery! Lewis's calm manner, his gentle, unimpassioned kindness, his late avoidance of her society, since—distracting thought—since he had begun to perceive her regard, his stern resolve, so soon acted upon, to quit the family, all proved that her affection was not returned. Cruel degradation, to love a man who was indifferent to her, and to have allowed him to perceive it. Annie possessed a spice of her father's haughty disposition, though in general the many essentially feminine points of her character prevented it from appearing; but this was an occasion which called forth every particle of pride in her nature. What could she do to remove the stain (for such in her morbid self-reproach did she consider it) from her? Nothing! Would to heaven she could lie down and die! Her father, too, evidently suspected the truth; Lord Bellefield would probably be the next person to become acquainted with the disgraceful history—and with the recollection of her cousin's name a new idea flashed across her. Yes, there was a way of escape—a method of silencing every busy tongue! But at what a sacrifice! Could she bring herself to consent to marry Lord Bellefield her object would be at once attained. No, she felt it was impossible. But then, on the other hand, could she bear to labour under the suspicion of loving, without return (there was the bitter sting!), a man beneath her in station?—(she could remember this difference now, when it would only add to her self-torment). Well, fortunately, she was not called on to decide the question at once; she would think more upon the matter: at all events, there was the possibility to fall back upon as a last resource. Then her thoughts reverted to Lewis, the brave, the true, the noble-hearted! She should never see him again; he would achieve greatness—(she felt as sure of *that* as if she had held in her hand the "Gazette" announcing his accept-

ance of the Premiership)—and some other would share it with him, while she should be the wife—the alternative was too hateful to contemplate, so she substituted, in her grave. Yes, she should never see him again! And she recalled his image, as on that summer day he had approached the window to summon her to the German lesson, when, as she read of Max Piccolomini, she had realised his appearance in the dark, proud beauty of him who sat beside her. She remembered his joyous, animated look as he bounded across the lawn, his glowing cheek, his bright, sparkling eye, the waving masses of his raven hair, and his eager, happy smile as his glance met hers! Two ideas engrossed her: he did not love her—she should never see him again; and forgetting her pride, her woman's dignity, even her self-upbraiding, in the intensity of her sorrow, the poor child flung herself on her bed in an agony of tears, and poured forth the bitter desolation of a lonely, breaking heart.

The next morning she pleaded a headache (a heart-ache would have been nearer the truth) as an excuse for breakfasting in her room, and did not make her appearance till it was nearly luncheon time. During that meal the General was unusually dictatorial, not to say fractious, and more than once spoke so harshly to Annie that she had some difficulty in repressing her tears. The meal was above half concluded ere Lord Bellefield, who excused himself by saying he had had some important letters to write, made his appearance. When at last he joined them, he did so apparently in the most amiable frame of mind; he received a reprimand from the General for his want of punctuality with a good-humoured smile, and introduced a carefully veiled compliment into his apology, which greatly tended to soften that gallant veteran's ill-temper; he interposed with skilful kindness to avert sundry crabbed attacks, aimed by Miss Livingstone at poor Annie, and introduced some interesting topic which drew out the elders, and gave a new and agreeable turn to the conversation; he sympathised with Annie's headache, for which he invented an equally opportune, plausible, and false excuse, and, in short, he laid himself out to fascinate, and succeeded *à merveille*. Annie felt really grateful to him, for he had come to her rescue at a moment in which kindness and sympathy were peculiarly acceptable to her.

When luncheon was concluded the General requested his daughter's presence in the library. Poor Annie rose to obey him. A strange, wild idea seized her, that he might be going to refer to Lewis's departure, perhaps to upbraid her for her share in causing it; and she trembled so violently that her knees almost refused to support her: in a moment Lord Bellefield was at her side.

"Take my arm," he said kindly; "the effects of your headache have scarcely passed away even yet." Annie accepted his arm in grateful silence, and in her guileless gentleness of heart accused herself of never before having done proper justice to her cousin's kindly nature. As they approached the library he detained her.

"Dear Annie," he said, "it would be affectation on my part to pretend ignorance of the subject on which your father is about to converse with you. The General appears for some cause, which

I am unable to divine, especially irritable this morning: do not needlessly oppose him; and should he chance to urge my cause urgently, remember, dear one, how entirely my future happiness is involved in your decision." As he ceased speaking he opened the library door without giving her an opportunity to reply, then, leading her in, pressed her hand, cast towards her an appealing glance, and turning, quitted the room. Lord Bellefield was a good tactician: for the first time the idea crossed Annie's mind, "He loves me then," and contrasting his devotion with Lewis's supposed indifference, she pitied him. Could she have seen his change of countenance as the door closed upon him she would scarcely have done so; his look was that of some fiend who had compassed the destruction of a human soul, the personification of triumphant malevolence.

The General began his harangue: he informed Annie that she was no longer a child, and so far he was right; but he did not add, as he might have done, had he been as well acquainted with the workings of her mind as we happen to be, that the last twenty-four hours had performed the work of years to effect the change from the thoughtless child to the thinking, feeling woman, for the first time cognisant of those fearful realities, LIFE and LOVE! But if the worthy General said nothing of love, he soon discoursed at great length of (we were about thoughtlessly to add) its usual *termination*, marriage; which institution he looked upon solely in a military point of view—viz., as a solemn alliance between two powers for their mutual benefit. Having given his oratorical powers a good breathing canter around (as he attempted to depict them) the flowery meads of matrimony, he gradually narrowed his circle till he was ambling about his daughter's proposed union with Lord Bellefield, and having by this time pretty well exhausted his eloquence, he dashed at once *in medias res* by inquiring whether she knew any just cause or impediment wherefore the engagement, broken off by him on the ground of her cousin's falsely supposed misconduct, should not there and then be renewed, with a view, at the fitting time, *i.e.*, as soon as she should attain the age of twenty-one, to their becoming man and wife. To this Annie replied with down-cast looks and many blushes, that if her father had no objection, she had made up her mind to live and die an old maid—she was going to add, like Aunt Martha, but, on second thoughts, doubting whether the association of ideas was likely to aid her cause, she repressed the simile. To this the General merely said "Pish!" and took snuff contemptuously: so Annie tried another tack.

"If ever," she observed, "she were to marry, it must be a great many years hence; she was such a careless, silly little thing, not at all fit to manage a family. Did not papa remember when she went with him and Charles Leicester on their grouse-shooting expedition, and their cottage was fifteen miles from everywhere, how she forgot to take any tea or sugar, and they were obliged to drink whisky-and-water for breakfast for nearly a week?"

But to this papa turned a deaf ear, and showed such unequivocal signs of being about to get into a rage, that Annie in despair fell back

upon her last argument, which was that, although her cousin Bellefield was very kind to her, and she had always looked upon him and Charles Leicester as her brothers, yet she did not like him well enough to wish to marry him,—“she was sure it was wicked to marry any one unless you loved him better—than anybody else,” she was going to say, but she changed it to, “than she loved Adolphus.” Thereupon the General’s anger, scarcely hitherto controlled, burst forth, and he informed her, with great volubility, that she had spoken the truth when she had called herself silly; for that her whole argument was so childish and absurd that he was perfectly ashamed of it and of her; and that if she chose to talk and act so childishly, she must expect to be treated as a child, and submit to the decision of those who were older and wiser than herself—that he would give her five minutes to reconsider the matter; and if she then refused to consent to a renewal of the engagement, he should begin to fear that she must have had some unworthy reason for such continued obstinacy. And as he uttered the last cruel words he fixed his little sharp eyes upon her as if he were trying to look her through and through. For a moment his reproach roused somewhat of his own spirit in his daughter; and drawing herself up proudly, the girl confronted him with flashing eyes and heaving bosom, and then, poor child! the consciousness of her secret attachment rushed upon her, and with streaming eyes she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, “I am very foolish—very wicked. Dearest papa, forgive me, and I will do whatever you wish!”

And thus it came about that the engagement with Lord Bellefield was so speedily renewed.

CHAPTER LII.

VINDICATES THE APHORISM THAT “’TIS AN ILL WIND WHICH BLOWS NO ONE ANY GOOD.”

RICHARD FRERE sat at his breakfast-table; before him stood an egg untasted, which, having once been hot, was so no longer, whilst a cup of coffee, that had undergone the same refrigerating process, threw out its fragrance unregarded. In his hand was an opened letter: we will take the liberty of peeping over his shoulder and making our readers acquainted with its contents. They ran thus:—

“DEAR FRERE,—I have quitted Broadhurst for ever, and broken off all connection between General Grant and myself. *Why* I have done this I cannot at present tell you; years hence, when time shall have seared wounds which now bleed at the slightest touch of memory, you shall know all. I have suffered, and must suffer, much; but suffering appears identical with existence—at least, in this present phase of being. I am ill in mind and body; the restless spirit within is at length beginning to tell upon even my iron constitution. The mind must have rest if I would continue sane, the body must be braced by exertion if I wish not to degenerate into a mere nervous hypo-

chondriac. Accordingly, when you receive this letter I shall have quitted England. My project—if such vague ideas as mine deserve the title—embraces a walking tour through Europe, which may possibly be extended to Syria and Persia, should my object not be previously attained. At my banker's lies the sum of £500, the wages (minus the little my travelling expenses will require) of my two years' slavery; before that is exhausted fresh funds will be placed at the disposal of my mother and sister, or I shall be dead; in either case I leave my family as a sacred deposit to your care. Dear old Frere, do not judge me harshly. I am not (if I know my own motives) acting with selfish rashness in this matter. My whole being, intellectual and physical, has received a fearful shock, and the course I propose to pursue appears to offer the only chance of a restoration to a healthy frame of mind. I could not do this did I not know that in you my mother and Rose will find a more efficient protector than the one they will lose for a season; I could not do this did I not love you so well as to have perfect faith in your friendship in the very highest sense of the word. Enough on this head—we *know* each other. In the unlikely event of pecuniary difficulty arising, apply to Mr. Coke, the solicitor, in Lincoln's Inn. He has my directions also in case of any accident befalling me, and from time to time he will be informed of my whereabouts, as for at least the next year I shall not write to any of you—it is my wish to forget that such a country as England exists. I enclose a note for poor Rose: may I ask you to deliver it in person, and break this matter to her and my mother? As yet they are not even aware that I have quitted Broadhurst. God bless you, and good-bye for—; but we will not pry into the future—'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'

"Yours ever, LEWIS ARUNDEL."

This letter Frere read carefully through; having done so, he ejaculated "Well!" in a tone of the utmost astonishment; then pushing his hair back from his forehead, as if he sought to give his intellectual powers freer play, he steadily reperused it, but apparently with little better success, for when he had a second time arrived at the signature, he gazed round the room with an expression of the most intense perplexity, exclaiming, "I never read such a letter, *never!*"

Spreading the paper before him, he carefully turned up his wristbands, seized a silver butter-knife, which in his abstraction he conceived to be a pen, felt the point to see if it would write, dipped it into the milk by way of ink, and thus prepared, again attacked the mysterious document sentence by sentence, keeping up during this third reading a running fire of comments somewhat after the following fashion—

"Hum! well! he's left Broadhurst for ever, etc., etc., and he can't tell me why now, but will years hence—when he has forgotten all the minute particulars which would make the affair intelligible, I suppose; sensible, very. Thrown away three hundred pounds a year, with a mother and sister depending upon him, and 'no future prospects,' as they say in all the 'shocking destitution' advertisements. Oh, wise young judge! Well, never mind. 'Seared wounds—existence identical with suffering—restless spirit affecting iron constitution'—*cum multis*

aliis, etc. Now, all that done into plain English means that he has got into a rampant state of mind about something, which, interfering with the gastric juices and all the other corporeal chemicals, has put his digestion out of sorts; *ergo*, in order to repair damages he has started on a continental walking-tour: might have done worse; the exercise will settle the dyspepsia in double-quick time; I'm doctor enough to know that. Then he leaves five hundred pounds to support one mother and sister till further notice, or till I receive intelligence of his untimely decease. In the meantime he very obligingly commits the live stock aforesaid to my care, as a sacred deposit; thus, without being allowed as much as even a voice in the matter, I suddenly find myself *plus* a mother and sister—more peculiar than pleasant, eh? Well, never mind. Then he asserts the truism that he could not do this without faith in my friendship, mentioning the unnecessary fact that we know each other. Next comes a very funny idea: if the money runs short, I'm to apply to *a lawyer* of all people in the world. Now, in my innocence I should have fancied just the reverse, and that if we had been burdened with more cash than we knew what to do with, the lawyer would have been the boy to help us through the difficulty! Well, one lives and learns—what have we next? Oh! my young friend wishes to forget the existence of—England! nothing more—wishes to forget the existence of his own glorious country! The boy's as mad as a March hare. Then he very coolly hands over to me the pleasant task of breaking the news of his most uncomfortable conduct to his left-off mother and sister; and for the prospective performance of all this toil and trouble he benevolently blesses me, and adducing a text of Scripture, which applies much more to my case than to his own, concludes.

“Well, I should just like anybody to explain to me the meaning of that letter; for as to making out either what he has done, or what he is going to do, from that document, I'd defy Œdipus himself to accomplish it. Now, let me see what is the first article in my little list of commissions: enlightening our mother and sister, I suppose; and a very hazy style of illumination I expect it will be, unless sister's note should happen to throw some brightness on the matter. ‘Poor Rose!’ He may well say poor! Why, she dotes on him—actually dotes on him. I'd give anything in the world to have her—that is, to have a sister love me as that girl loves him. I know she will be miserable; I'm certain of it;” and sticking the butter-knife behind his ear, a place in which he still retained the school-boy habit of putting his pen, Frere rose from his seat, and resuming his soliloquy, began to pace the room with hasty strides.

“What can have induced the boy to throw up his appointment in this insane fashion I can't conceive. If it were any one else, I should fancy he had misconducted himself, and that the rhapsodical letter was merely an excuse for avoiding a plain statement of a disgraceful truth; but there's something about Lewis Arundel which makes one certain he'd never commit a small sin or conceal a large one. If he had murdered that scamp Bellefield in a duel, he would have mentioned it directly. Perhaps old Grant has insulted his dignity;

Arcades ambo, they're a peppery pair; 'high stomached are they both, and full of ire.' The elder gentleman has a double claim, literal and metaphorical, to the quotation, if I remember his build rightly. Poor Lewis! I expect he is in a dreadful state of mind; I should feel very sorry for him if I were not so angry with him for bothering Rose in this way. Well, I must think about starting; no science shop for me to-day, or to-morrow either. By-the-bye, I must ring for Jemima, and enlighten her as to my movements, and she'll be as cantankerous as a bilious crocodile, I expect. However, it must be done, so here goes;" and giving the bell a very modest pull, he dropped into his reading-chair awaiting the arrival of his acidulated domestic with a singularly mild, not to say timid expression of countenance.

"Oh, Jemima, I rang—that is to say, the bell rang—to tell you I am obliged to go out of town to-day, and shall not return till to-morrow evening at the earliest," began Frere in an apologetic tone of voice, as his ancient duenna, puffing and blowing from the ascent of the staircase, entered.

As he spoke, the positively cross expression of her antique features advanced a degree, and became comparatively crosser as she replied with a toss of the head—

"Well, I'm sure! what next, I wonder!" Then addressing her master in a tone of withering contempt, she continued: "Do you know what it is you're a sayin' of, Master Richard?"

"Well, I believe I do," returned Frere humbly.

"I believe you don't," was the unceremonious rejoinder. "I believe you go on reading them foreign books in heathen Greek till you don't know what you're a saying or a doing of; here you tell me one thing one day, and something liarmetrically contradictory of it the next, till old Nick his blessed self wouldn't know how to act to please you!"

"Why, what have I said contradictory, as you call it?" inquired Frere.

"What have you said?" repeated Jemima in a tone of intense disgust; "why you've told me to get ready a dinner for six this here very day, and now you say you're a going out of town, and won't be back till to-morrow night. Do you call that behaving as a master of a house ought to do, let alone a sanatory Christian?"

"A true bill, by all that's unlucky!" muttered Frere.

"It's a true bill that you'll have to pay for as fine a couple of chickens as ever was trussed, which is now cast away before swine, for as to 'em keeping till the day after to-morrow, it's a model impossibilitude."

"I should rather have thought a physical one," suggested Frere *sotto voce*.

"Then there's a tongue," continued Jemima, unheeding the interruption, "as beautiful a one as ever I set my two eyes on."

"I wonder if it's as long as her own," observed Frere, speculatively pursuing the under-current of his private annotations.

"A tongue that with care and good carving would have lasted you for breakfast for a fortnight."

"Then it would not have gone by any means as fast as a certain unruly member with which I am acquainted," continued the commentator.

"Together with a lovely turbot, which I almost had to go down on my bended knees to get out of the fishmonger—turbot being like pearls of price at this time of year, with three dozen of natives, which was astonished not to be able to procure, so was forced to put up with lobster sauce instead, and a beauty it is now, though it will be *non compe scientis* by the day after to-morrow, and fit only to make people sick in the dusthole, where it's a sin to let it go, with so many poor starving creatures a-wanting it, which was not the case when your blessed mother was upon the face of the earth, in a violent satin gown, a setting you moral copies 'A woeful waist makes wilful want,' and 'My name is Norval, on the Grumpy Hills,' which ought to have taught you better than to have asked five gents to come here, looking like fools, and yourself the sixth, gone out of town, leaving me to tell 'em so, with the house full of good things all turning bad, and nobody but me to eat 'em, which is a hard trial for an aged woman, that, taking you from the month, ought to be respected, if grey hairs is honourable, which they don't seem to be nowadays, when we have got a bad lot of wigs over our heads, with half of 'em nothing in 'em but crimped horsehair, I do believe."

Here the worthy woman's breath failing her, Frere was at length able to get in a word or two.

"My good Jemima," he began blandly, "listen to me. When I invited my friends and ordered a dinner, I was of course not aware that I should be suddenly called upon to leave town; such being the case, however, we must make the best of it. I will, therefore, despatch notes to the gentlemen who were to have been my guests, putting them off; and in regard to the comestibles, such as from their animal fabric require cooking must be cooked, and we must endeavour to consume them in detail at—at our earliest convenience. Now have I slain your Hydra, my good Jemima?"

"I don't understand your gibberish, Master Richard, nor don't want to. My poor dear mistress, which piously departed this moral life in a mahogany coffin and silver nails, didn't used to talk so, though she'd been brought up at boarding-school with the best of pastors and masters to honour and obey; but this I know, that the blessed dinner will go to rack and ruin in spite of all your cooking retail combustibles, and that puts me in mind, what have you been doing with your breakfast? why, goodness gracious! he's never touched a bit of it, and" (here she caught sight of the butter-knife), "Oh lor, oh lor! if he ain't gone clean demented. What's the matter?" she continued, as Frere, astonished at her unusual vehemence, sought to learn the cause of her disquietude; "what's the matter, indeed? Look in the glass, and if you're fit for any place but Bedlam you'll soon see what's the matter."

Thus apostrophised, Frere turned his eyes in the unwonted direction of the chimney-glass, and there descriing the butter-knife behind his ear, was somewhat disconcerted; and muttering that it must have got

there by accident, of its own accord, instead of a pen, he felt that his position was quite untenable, and so, retreating ignominiously to the stronghold of his own bedroom, he busied himself in preparation for his departure, actually going the length of shaving himself and putting on a decent suit of clothes. Another half-hour saw him on the road to —.

It was on the afternoon of the same day that Rose Arundel sat at the window of their little drawing-room sketching the tower of an old church, which peeped prettily from amid a luxuriant group of giant elms. Mrs. Arundel had gone in a friend's carriage to execute a host of minor commissions at a neighbouring town, and Rose, having written part of her quota for the next month's magazine, was rewarding her industry by endeavouring to catch a peculiar effect of sunlight on the tower aforesaid. Having worked with brush and pencil for some minutes, she paused to criticise her drawing. It was a faithful copy of the landscape before her nicely executed, but she shook her head in dissatisfaction.

"It is laboured and tame," she said; "half-a-dozen touches from Lewis's pencil would have given the effect twice as well. What a strange thing is the power of genius, the hand creating at a stroke the brilliant conceptions of the mind!" and then she drew out some of her brother's sketches in Germany: bold, free, spirited, and marked by refined, severe taste, skilled alike to select the telling points and reject the commonplace details, save where such details were required to assist in carrying out the leading idea, they all bore indisputable evidence of a true artist-mind.

From the sketches Rose grew to think of him who had traced them. She had not heard from Lewis for quite three weeks; his last letter had indicated a mind ill at ease, and Rose had written to him to entreat him to confide in her, if, as she feared, he was unhappy. Why did he not reply to her letter? Answering her question with a sigh, she turned again, pencil in hand, to the window, and perceived a gentleman advancing rapidly along the road leading to their cottage. For a moment her pulse beat quickly: could it be her brother? but Lewis's was a figure not easily to be mistaken, and a second glance convinced her she was wrong; and then she gave a little start, and a bright blush made her look so pretty that it was quite a shame nobody was there to see her; had there been, perhaps she would not have turned to the glass, and still blushing and smiling, smoothed the glossy bands of her rich brown hair. Why she performed this ceremony at this particular moment we leave our female readers to discover, and having done so, of their courtesy to enlighten us. Then, like a puritanical little hypocrite as she was, she reseated herself at her drawing-table, sketching away as zealously as if the results of *fixature* and *bandoline* had been as little known to the philosophy of the nineteenth century as is the secret of alchemy.

In another minute the full, rich tones of a man's voice were heard, bearing down the shrill expostulations of Rachel—

"Never mind about your mistress, young woman; where's Miss Rose?"

"Upstairs, sir; but——"

"There, that'll do, 'but me no buts;' let me get by; which is the door?—here we are."

And as he uttered the last words, Frere, tired and dusty, with a carpet bag and a parcel of books in one hand, and his hat and *the* umbrella in the other, entered the little drawing-room. Rose advanced to receive him with a bright smile.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Frere," she said, extending her hand. Frere shook it heartily, squeezing it in the process much harder than was agreeable.

"Why, how prett—a—a—I mean to say how well you are looking," he began. "Country air suits you better than the pea-soup-coloured atmosphere of London."

So unable did he appear to remove his eyes from her face, that, in spite of her best endeavours, the becoming blush again overspread her features; turning away as if for the purpose of arranging her drawing materials, she observed—

"Mamma is taking a drive with a friend; I'm afraid she won't return just yet."

"So much the better," began Frere; then perceiving the rudeness of the remark, he continued, "what I mean is that I want to talk to you about a letter I've received from Lewis, and I can get on better with you than with mamma, I expect. You and I understand each other, you see; now Mrs. Arundel thinks I'm a bear or thereabouts, and fit for nothing but growling and biting."

"Perhaps I think the same," remarked Rose, smiling at this unexpected proof of his penetration; "but you spoke of a letter from Lewis; I'm so glad he has written to you, for it's three weeks since I've heard from him. You are looking grave," she added hurriedly; then becoming suddenly alarmed, she continued: "Something has happened to him, and you have come to break it to us—is it not so?"

Frere regarded her with a good-natured smile, half laughing at, half pitying her; then holding up his finger, as if he were rebuking an impetuous child, he said—

"How thoroughly woman-like and unreasonable, jumping to a conclusion without any sufficient data to go upon; selecting the most dolorous hypothesis imaginable, and then preparing to afflict yourself at sight of the phantom your own fancy has conjured up; now," he continued, taking her hand and half leading, half urging her to the sofa—"sit down, listen quietly to what I have to tell you—think the matter over with your usual good sense—and then we'll consult together as to the best course to pursue; and if anything useful and expedient can be devised, rely upon me to execute it."

Pale and trembling, but in every other respect collected, Rose obeyed. As soon as she was seated Frere placed himself by her side, and drawing out Lewis's letter, said—

"Your brother has left Broadhurst and thrown up his tutorship; his reasons for so doing he has not explained to me; but as he evidently wrote in a state of considerable mental agitation, that may account for the omission. Moreover, he promises to tell me all at some future

time: he sends also a note for you, which may perhaps throw more light upon the matter. Here it is."

So saying, he produced the enclosure, and breaking the seal, handed it to Rose. It ran as follows:—

"Do not fancy me unkind, dearest Rose, or insensible to the blessing (almost the only one now left me) of your affection, when at this miserable crisis of my fate I deny myself the consolation of your sympathy: I say, deny myself, for wretched as I am, torn as is my soul by the blackest unbelief in the existence of human truth and goodness, I yet know you to be good and true, and love you more entirely than I have ever done. Frere will tell you that I am even now, as you read these words, upon a foreign soil; the length of my self-imposed exile is as yet unfixed, but many months must elapse ere I shall again visit England. Had I come to you, I could not have withheld my confidence; your sympathy would have utterly unmanned me; I should have lost the little strength and self-reliance remaining to me, and have totally succumbed to the blow that has fallen upon me. Rose, love, at times I fancied, when you were staying in Park Crescent, that you divined my secret! The struggle was then going on, and I dreamed in my folly that self-conquest was attainable; thus madly have I accomplished the ruin of my happiness. I have quitted Broadhurst by my own act—fled to preserve my honour; that and an aching heart are all that remain to me. I trust to you and Frere to communicate this matter to my mother: of course, should you from my broken hints divine the truth, you would never dream of imparting it to her; a thousand reasons forbid it. In regard to Frere, I leave you to judge; he is trustworthy as yourself. If he smile at my folly in loving so poor a thing as he holds woman to be, his kind heart will sympathise with my wretchedness, even if my own weakness has produced it. I have entrusted him to pay my mother the usual yearly allowance, and placed funds at his disposal to enable him to do so. While I live, she and you shall never know greater poverty than you endure at present. I go to regain, in foreign travel, the vigour of mind and body which this blow has well-nigh paralysed. Thank God in your prayers that he has spared my reason, and left me strength to make this effort: may he watch over you both! In all difficulties apply to Richard Frere. Good-bye, dearest; forgive me the sorrow I occasion you; it seems as though I were fated alike to suffer myself and to cause suffering to all I love.—Yours ever affectionately, LEWIS."

Rose perused her brother's letter eagerly; as she proceeded her bright eyes filled with tears. Frere waited until she had concluded, and then, without speaking, handed her the epistle he himself had received. When she had also finished this, he inquired, "Well, what do you make of it—anything?"

Rose turned away her head, and drying her eyes, replied with a deep sigh, "Poor fellow, it is only too clear!"

"That's just about the very last remark now that I should have expected any one to utter, after having read that letter. What a thing it is to be clever!" observed Frere.

Without noticing his observation, Rose placed in his hand Lewis's

letter to herself. Frere read it with a gradually elongating countenance merely pausing to mutter, "Much he knows about my opinion of women."

Having finished it, he refolded it carefully, and handing it back to Rose, began, "This enlightens us in some degree as to the matter; Lewis has, it seems, fallen in love as they call it, disastrously, with some party unknown."

"Oh, you cannot doubt to whom he refers," exclaimed Rose earnestly. "It is this to which my fears have pointed ever since I first beheld her; thrown into constant communication with such a creature, one fitted——"

"Why you don't mean to say he's fallen in love with Miss Livingstone?" interrupted Frere, looking the very picture of astonishment.

"This is scarcely a subject on which it is kind to jest, Mr. Frere," rejoined Rose almost sternly; "of course I refer to that gentle, lovely, fascinating Annie Grant."

"I do assure you I was perfectly serious," returned Frere hastily. "I wouldn't joke about anything that makes you unhappy, if my life depended upon it; but I never dreamed of its being Annie Grant; why, she's engaged to her unpleasant cousin, Lord Bellefield."

"I thought the engagement was broken off," observed Rose.

"Ay, but it's on again," resumed Frere. "I met a man yesterday who is one of Bellefield's intimates, and he told me that his lordship was staying at Broadhurst—that he has made up his feud with the General, and that the engagement has been formally renewed."

"Now, then, I see it all," exclaimed Rose. "Poor Lewis has been long struggling against a deep attachment for that sweet Annie, whom none could know without loving; nourishing, perhaps half-unconsciously, a secret hope that she was not wholly indifferent to him—a hope which to an honourable mind like his must have brought more pain than pleasure. And now this renewal of the engagement must have proved to him how entirely he was mistaken; and unable to witness his rival's triumph, he has, as he tells me, fled the spot where each kind word from Annie, and every haughty glance from Lord Bellefield, would have been like a dagger to his heart. No wonder the mental conflict has nearly maddened him—my poor, poor Lewis!"

Preoccupied by her sympathy for her brother's sorrow, Rose did not observe the effect her words had produced upon Frere; nor was it till he spoke in a low, deep voice, which trembled with suppressed feeling, that she observed his emotion.

"Ay," he said, more as if communing with his own spirit than as though he were addressing her, "Ay, it must be a hard thing to love with all the depth of such a passionate nature as Lewis's one who is indifferent to him; but it is a more bitter thing still to see the long years gliding by, and to pass from boyhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and to find middle age stealing quickly upon you, and never to have had any human being to love you—never to have found any heart on which you might pour out those riches of affection which every

generous nature pants to bestow." He paused—then, as the recollections he had excited seemed to crowd upon him, continued, "Oh, the bitter tears I have shed when, scarcely more than a child, I have wept to hear other boys tell of happy homes, and a mother's love, and the affection of brothers and sisters; then came the silent but more enduring sorrow of youth, when tears can no longer form a vent for the heart's isolation, and the restless spirit preys upon itself; and last, the struggle of maturer manhood, which in its meridian strength contends against the sorrows of its weaker morning, and strives to live down the fruitless longing for that affection which it cannot attain, and conquering all but the one abiding grief, remains to own itself still lonely-hearted, and sees its only hope of comfort in the grave. Ay, this is grief which the help of God alone can enable one to endure."

The deep feeling, the simple, manly pathos with which he spoke were more than Rose or any true woman could hear unmoved. Laying her hand on his to attract his attention, she said in a sweet, gentle voice, "Indeed, Mr. Frere, you do your friends injustice. Lewis loves you as a brother; my dear father had the warmest affection for you, and often said that if Lewis did but resemble you, if he proved as high-principled, as kind-hearted, and as persevering, his dearest wishes would be fulfilled: even I myself——" she paused, glancing timidly at her companion; but as he remained with his hand pressed upon his brow, apparently buried in abstraction, she gathered courage, and continued—

"Even I feel that in you God has given me a second brother, and that I should be most ungrateful, most unworthy such disinterested kindness as you have invariably shown me, did I not feel the warmest esteem and—and—gratitude——"

And here, suddenly becoming aware that Frere's beautiful eyes were fixed upon her with the same peculiar expression of delight which she had once before observed in them, on the occasion of his telling her how he had convinced Rasper the irascible of the evil of duelling, poor Rose's eloquence failed her, and she became abruptly silent. Frere paused for a moment, and then with a forced calmness which scarcely veiled the depth of his emotion, said—

"Dear Rose, forgive me if I am about to cause you pain; but your kindness has afforded me a vision of such exquisite happiness that it would be a source of endless self-reproach to me if through any reserve on my part I failed to realise it. Rose, you cannot be my sister, but you can, if you will, hold a far dearer title—you can become my honoured wife. I have loved you long, although it was my sorrow at your departure from London which first opened my eyes to the nature of my feelings. Since then my sense of my own unworthiness to aspire to the joy of possessing such an angel has alone kept me silent. Rose, I know my own presumption in thus addressing you; I am aware only too painfully of my own uncouthness, my deficiency in all the polished conventionalities of life; but if the deepest, tenderest devotion of a heart which has pined through a lifetime for some object on which to pour forth its treasure of love can make you happy; if you think that in time you could in some degree return my affection——"

"Oh, hush, hush!" interrupted Rose, in a broken, faltering voice; "I cannot bear to hear you speak thus! If, good and noble as you are, my love can indeed make you happier——"

She could not conclude her sentence, but Frere seemed perfectly satisfied with the fragment as it stood.

The result of the interview may best be gathered from the following remark of Mrs. Arundel, who, returning home about an hour after the occurrence of the conversation above related, declared that when she came in "she found to her horror and astonishment *Ursa Major* looking as if he would like to hug Rose, and, stranger still, Rose appearing rather flattered by the attention than otherwise."

CHAPTER LIII.

DEPICTS THE MARRIED LIFE OF CHARLEY LEICESTER.

WE must now request our readers to draw on the seven-leagued boots of their imaginations, and, thus accoutred, to stride remorselessly over the space of two years. 'Tis soon done; a slight mental effort, an agile hop, skip, and jump of the fancy, and the gulf is passed—time is annihilated. Let us raise the curtain and mark the changes the destroyer has wrought. The world goes round much the same as before; two years make little difference in the personal appearance of the fifty-eight-centuries-old planet—no lack of births, deaths, and marriages to regulate the average supply of the human race; if the cholera creates a deficiency one year, more poor curates marry, and starving Irishmen take unto themselves wives, the next, and those "beautiful" babies who contrive to turn out such very plain adults multiply upon the face of the earth, and the thinned ranks are replenished. And yet two years cause strange alterations when we dive beneath the surface of society and become cognisant of the fortunes of individuals: smiles have given place to tears, and the grief of the mourner has turned to joy; poor men have grown rich and rich men poor, and the bad (with but few, very few exceptions to prove the rule) have become worse, and the good advanced in righteousness; and the mass of the half-hearted, clinging yet more closely to this earth, of which they are so enamoured, where their grave is awaiting them, see heaven afar off, and wish feebly, and for a shorter time each seventh day, that they were good enough to reach it. Thus the passenger train, with its cargo of hopes, and fears, and wishes, speeds along the RAILROAD OF LIFE.

In a magnificent apartment in one of those Arabian-night-like edifices, a Venetian palazzo—which, having belonged to one of the great historical families of the middle ages, whose chief was, by virtue of his position, a petty sovereign, was now let for the season to a wealthy Englishman—lounged Charley Leicester, whose own surprise at the change of fortune which could render such a description of him appropriate had not even yet ceased. On a sofa opposite sat his wife, on whose knee was perched a very young gentleman, to whom we

could scarcely sooner have introduced our readers, for the excellent reason that he had not made his appearance at the Cradle Terminus of our Railroad when last we treated of his amiable parents. The present phase of this extremely young aristocrat was, so to speak, one of ex-babyhood; he was in the very act of ceasing to be "the most beautiful creature in the world," and as yet retained enough of his pristine loveliness to deserve the epithet of a really pretty child. He exhibited in his proper person an instance of that strange phenomenon which (why, we have either *no* idea, or we hope, for the sake of morality, a *wrong* one) always excites such extreme astonishment in the minds of all nurses, maiden aunts, and female acquaintance—he was decidedly like his own proper papa and mamma. For the rest, when placed on the carpet he preferred a quadrupedal to an erect method of progression—had a strange habit of making the rashest experiments in gastronomy by putting everything wrong and dangerous into his mouth—never sat still for two minutes consecutively—would, in the same breath, laugh heartily and bewail himself piteously, from exciting causes, which may be expected to remain a mystery throughout all time, and confined his conversation to two substantives and a colloquial hieroglyphic—viz., "Pap-pa," "Mam-ma," and "gib-Tarley," which last was believed to be an infantine-English compound of his Christian name and the verb "to give," and signified an insatiable desire to render himself monarch of all he surveyed by a process of general self-appropriation. At the moment in which we shall introduce the reader to the party thus assembled, a servant entered bearing a packet of letters on a silver waiter, and handing them to Leicester, withdrew.

"Letters from England, by Jove!" exclaimed Charles, untying the string which encircled them.

"Any for me, Charley?" inquired Laura, who in her position of wife and mother looked the prettiest little matron conceivable.

"Two for me, and one for you, from Annie Grant, if I may judge by the writing," replied her husband, as he rose to hand it to her.

"Gib-Tarley, pap-pa! gib-Tarley," vociferated that individual in the prettiest of infantine trebles, making insane plunges at the letters.

Laura, raising her hand above the curly pate of her acquisitive offspring, gained possession of the interesting missive, then, holding "Tarley" out at arm's length, she exclaimed—

"Here, take your boy, papa; he is in a troublesome humour, and I wish to read my letter in peace.

Leicester meekly obeyed, muttering as he did so, "Wide-awake young woman—knows a thing or two, that mamma of yours, master Tarley;" then taking the child on his knee, he continued, "Now Tarley means to be a good boy, and sit quite still, because papa is going to be busy with the affairs of the state."

The effect of this exhortation appeared to be to excite, on the part of the young gentleman to whom it was addressed, a sudden and violent determination there and then to convert his father into an extempore high-mettled racer, which equine transformation he strove to accomplish by placing himself astride on the paternal knee, clutching a

fragile and delicate watch-chain by way of bridle, kicking the sides of his fictitious Rosinante with immense juvenile vigour, and vociferating at the top of his small voice, "Pap-pa, gee-gee! pap-pa, gee-gee!"

Charley cast an appealing glance at his wife; she appeared hopelessly immersed in her letter, so resigning himself to his fate, he murmured faintly, "The thermometer stands at 75° in the shade, that's all," and started at a brisk canter. The progress of the ride, however, served to exhilarate both horse and jockey to such a degree, that ere long a violent game at romps was established, which ended in papa's perching his youthful son on his shoulder, and still influenced by the equestrian hypothesis, galloping round the room with him, and clearing the sofa at a flying leap in the course of their rapid career, to Laura's undisguised terror.

"There, my dear Charles, that will do; you will break the child's neck and your own also to a certainty if you do such wild things. Now ring for nurse to take him, I want to talk to you about this letter."

"Tarley," however, by no means approving of this arrangement, and insisting strenuously upon a prolongation of his ride, his father, who it must be confessed rather spoiled him than otherwise, complied with his demand for "Gee-gee more!" by again dashing round the room with him, and continuing his headlong course till he had deposited his rider within the august precincts of the nursery, where the precocious Ducrow, falling under the baleful glance of an autocratic nurse, subsided into a state of infantine depression, and was heard no more.

Leicester, having returned to the apartment in which he had left his wife, flung himself, in a state of apparent exhaustion, upon the sofa he had lately jumped over, exclaiming, "That child will be the death of me, I'm certain of it; where he can get all this dreadful energy of character from I can't conceive. It must come from the Peyton side, for I'm certain that even at his early age I had a much more clearly defined idea of the *dolce far niente* than that unnatural little essence of quicksilver possesses. By Jove, if he should turn out as fast when he grows up as he appears now before he has begun growing at all, it will be an awful look out for our grey hairs."

"Nonsense, Charley, you've energy enough when you care to exert it; in fact it is all your own doing, you know you delight to excite the child. But now be sensible, and sit up and listen to me, for I really want to consult you about this letter."

"As to listening to you, my love, I'm only too happy to do so at all times and seasons, and I'll promise to be as sensible as is compatible with my general mental capacity, but in regard to the sitting up, you really must excuse me. I have a strong idea I sprained something in jumping over this sofa just now, my back or my shin, I forget the precise spot, but I can assure you it requires rest."

"Oh, you idle man," was the laughing answer, "how incorrigible you are!" and as Laura pronounced this condemnation she seated herself on a footstool by her husband's side, drew out the letter,



CHARLEY LEICESTER'S DOMESTIC FELICITY.

and handing it to him, said, "They have consented to my plan, and are coming here in the course of the next fortnight; but I do not like the tone of Annie's note, she must be much more really ill than I was at all aware of, and there appears throughout a spirit of depression, which is completely foreign to her nature—I cannot understand it."

"I have a despatch from the General," began Leicester, leisurely breaking the seal; "perhaps that may tend to elucidate the mystery. What a fist the old fellow writes! the letters all hold up their heads as if they were a regiment of soldiers, and his signature bristles like a stand of bayonets. Oh! he 'hopes to be in Venice by Friday week, if his daughter's health, which has given him some little uneasiness lately, should permit them to travel with the degree of swiftness and punctuality which has appeared to him expedient in laying out their intended route.' I'm very sorry dear Annie is ill; what can be the matter with her, think you?"

"Who is your other letter from?" inquired Laura, avoiding his last question.

"From Bellefield," returned Leicester, opening it; "he can't come with the Grants, but he'll follow them before long. He has backed the Dodona colt for the Derby, and has got a heavier book on the race than he likes; he was hit hard at the last Newmarket meeting, and if anything were to go wrong with the colt, and he not on the spot to hedge on the first hint, the consequences might be more unpleasant than people in general are aware of. Well! thank heaven, with all my follies, I always contrived to keep clear of the betting-ring. I don't like that note of Belle's; he'll get into some awful scrape if he does not take care."

"For which I shall not pity him one bit," rejoined Laura. "Born to a high position, gifted with a princely fortune; if he chooses to disgrace the one, and squander the other by gambling with a set of blacklegs, he deserves whatever he may meet with. I hope I have not pained you, Charley dearest," she continued, observing a slight shade of annoyance on her husband's good-humoured face; "but truth is truth; I cannot like that man; I wish he were not your brother, and oh! how I wish he were not to be the husband of our darling Annie. I say, Charley, how came it you never fell in love with her yourself? Do you know—don't be conceited now—I think I was very lucky to get you under the circumstances?"

A gay laughing answer rose to the lips of Charles Leicester, and then the memory of the empty, heartless life he had led before his marriage, and the deep, true happiness he had enjoyed since, came across him, and drawing his wife towards him, he imprinted a kiss on her smooth forehead as he replied, "If I am, indeed, worthy of your affection, darling, it is you alone who have rendered me so, for before I knew you I was a mere conceited, idle, frivolous butterfly, spoiled by the world, and with just sense enough (like most spoilt children) to despise my spoiler, without sufficient manliness of nature to free myself from its trammels by any unassisted efforts of my own."

What reply Laura made to this speech, if indeed she made any,

we do not feel ourselves called upon to chronicle; suffice it to say that she did not, by word, look, or deed evince the smallest symptom of having repented of her bargain. A pause ensued, which was broken by Leicester, who exclaimed—

“By Jove! I was very nearly forgetting all about it—what’s o’clock?” then drawing out a small enamelled watch, one of the relics of former days of dandyism, he continued, “half-past three; there is just time. I have procured an order to see the pictures Cardinal d’Ancona was telling you about last week.”

“Oh, the two paintings from Lord Byron’s ‘Giaour,’ by the young artist about whom no one knows anything, and who is said to be a genius? I’m so glad; when shall we go?” inquired Laura.

“Why, it’s a case of Hobson’s choice,” returned Leicester; “for it seems the painter was so tormented by idle people coming to his studio that he has been forced to lay down a rule only to admit visitors on two days in the week, from three till five; but the oddest part of the business is that he chooses to be absent on these occasions, leaving an old attendant to play cicerone—in fact, there appears to be some kind of mystery about the man. However, to-day is *the* day, so the sooner we’re off the better, more especially as I must be with the Consul by half-past four.”

“I shall be ready in less than five minutes,” rejoined Laura, “so let us prosecute this wondrous adventure by all means—a mystery is such a rarity in these matter-of-fact days, that even so small a one as that of a man who prefers avoiding one’s notice instead of seeking to obtrude himself upon it, is interesting.”

“When will women cease to be curious?” soliloquised Leicester, elongating his body in order to reach a newspaper without the trouble of rising. Another quarter of an hour saw them *en route*.

Under Leicester’s able guidance they stopped at the door of a small house at the corner of a street turning out of the square of St. Mark’s. On presenting the order an old man with grey hair came forward and ushered the visitors into a room lighted by a skylight, beneath which were arranged various pictures, some finished, others in a less forward state of preparation. After examining several of the smaller sketches, which displayed unusual talent, both Leicester and his wife paused with one accord before a large painting. The old cicerone approached them, “That is the picture,” he said in Italian, “about which every one is talking; it is very grand, but the companion picture is finer: the Signore has refused 600 guineas for the pair. They are taken from your Lord Byron’s poem, the ‘Giaour’; here is the passage, *ecco lo!*” As he spoke he pointed to the following stanzas—

“With sabre shiver’d to the hilt,
 Yet dripping with the blood he spilt;
 Yet strain’d within the sever’d hand
 Which quivers round that faithless brand;
 His turban far behind him roll’d,
 And cleft in twain its firmest fold;
 His flowing robe by falchion torn,
 And crimson as those clouds of morn

That, streak'd with dusky red, portend
 The day shall have a stormy end ;
 A stain on every bush that bore
 A fragment of his palampore,
 His breast with wounds unnumber'd riv'n,
 His back to earth, his face to heaven,
 Fall'n Hassan lies—his unclosed eye
 Yet lowering on his enemy,
 As if the hour that seal'd his fate
 Surviving left his quenchless hate ;
 And o'er him bends that foe with brow
 As dark as his that bled below."

The artist had indeed well represented the fearful tragedy; the principal light in the painting fell upon the figure, and especially the face of the prostrate Hassan, which convulsed by the death agony, yet glanced with an expression of "quenchless hate" upon his destroyer. The features of the Giaour, owing to the position in which he stood, with one foot planted on the breast of his fallen enemy, were not visible, but his figure was tall and commanding, and his attitude in the highest degree expressive of triumphant power. Leaning against the same easel stood the companion picture—it contained but a single figure, but it was one which being seen, it was scarcely possible to forget, such a living embodiment did it present of hopeless despair. The stony eye, the sunken cheek, the stern yet spiritless mouth—all spoke of one who had indeed "nothing left to love or hate," all realised the painful description of "the vacant bosom's wilderness," that paralysis of the soul in which

"The keenest pangs the wretched find
 Are rapture to the dreary void,
 The leafless desert of the mind."

In this painting also the features of the Giaour were partially concealed by the hood of a monk's frock, which threw a deep shade across them, and the drooping, nerveless figure served in great degree to tell the tale. The two pictures were entitled "Revenge, and its Fruits." Laura and her husband gazed at them long and silently; at length Leicester observed, with the air of a man who tries to dissipate a sentiment akin to superstitious fear, by listening to the sound of his own voice—

"'Pon my word, they are very extraordinary pictures; there's I don't know what about them—a kind of uncomfortable fascination—they're very horrible, but they're very clever, eh?"

"Oh! they are most wonderful," returned Laura in a subdued voice, as if she almost feared to trust herself to speak, "particularly the second. I never saw anything express such utter hopelessness as that face and attitude; one feels that active pain even would be a relief to the monotony of that dull despair. What an uncommon person the artist must be! The execution is good, but it is the *mind* in the pictures that is so extraordinary."

Leicester, who during this speech had been attentively examining

the face of the prostrate Hassan, suddenly exclaimed, "Yes! of course, now I see who it is. Look here, Laura, do you perceive a likeness to anybody you know in the face of this floored individual?"

Thus accosted, Laura, after a moment's scrutiny, replied, "It is like your brother."

"Just what struck me," returned Leicester; "what a quaint coincidence! I've seen some one somewhere of whom the other fellow reminds me too."

"The figure bears a shadowy resemblance to the Signore Luigi himself, Eccellenza," observed the old attendant; "at least, I have always thought so."

"He must be rather an alarming, sanguinary kind of personage, at that rate; he has not flattered himself, I must say."

"The Signore is tall and dark, but handsome as the Belvidere Apollo—he is not sanguinary as you say, Signore, but of a gentle kindness which touches the heart. I am bound to love him, for he saved me from ruin."

"How was that? tell me," asked Laura in a tone of interest.

"My dear Laura, I am grieved to prevent your hearing this worthy man's recital, but unfortunately it only wants five minutes of the time at which I promised to be with the Consul."

"How long shall you be obliged to stay with him?" inquired his wife.

"Less than half-an-hour, perhaps twenty-five minutes would suffice," was the reply; "shall I leave you here and come back for you before five o'clock?"

"There are several pictures the Signora has not yet examined," suggested the old man. Thus urged, Laura consented to remain; an idea which she would not confess even to her husband, so wild and fanciful did she feel it to be, had taken possession of her, and her curiosity in regard to the mysterious artist had become redoubled.

CHAPTER LIV.

TREATS OF A METAMORPHOSIS NOT DESCRIBED BY OVID.

"YOU were going to tell me some anecdote," Laura observed as Leicester quitted the studio.

The Cicerone, who was a venerable-looking old man with grey hair and a thoroughly Italian cast of features, placed a chair for the lady before a view in Venice, at which she had not yet looked, and then resumed—

"*Favorisca di sedersi la prego Signora.* I was going to relate how the Signore whom I serve generously rescued me from ruin; but to do so I must trouble the Eccellenza with a few particulars of my own history. I was originally educated as a painter, but although I was a correct copyist, and possessed some skill in mixing colours, I had not the *afflatus*, the inexplicable, the divine gift of genius, which cannot be acquired. Look at these pictures," he continued, warming into

enthusiasm as he pointed to the paintings from the "Giaour"; "in my prime I could execute better than that, my colouring was richer and smoother, my shades less hard and abrupt, though to acquire that skill had cost me fifteen years' constant study; but alas! the mind was wanting. I could execute but I could not conceive—my pictures would never have entranced any one as you were entranced before those great soul-creations!" He paused, sighed deeply, then resumed: "So I grew poor, I had a wife and children to support, and I bent my pride to become a scene-painter at the Fenice Theatre. I worked there twenty long years, and then from over use my eyesight grew dim, and they discarded me. After that I was employed by the great painter of the day, Signore B—elli, to prepare canvas and mix colours for the young artists whom he instructed. A year and a half ago a pupil came to study with him—he was a stranger—"

"Of what country?" inquired Laura eagerly.

"I cannot inform the Signora. He speaks French, German, Italian, and very rarely English, equally well, but I do not think he is a fellow-countryman of mine. The other young artists who frequented B—elli's studio would often tease me for sport, but the Signore was always kind, and would not permit them to do so when he was present. One day a pupil, who was finishing the drapery of a Madonna and Child, of which picture all the more important parts had been painted by B—elli himself, called to me to bring him some particular colour which he required—in my haste I stumbled and overthrew a flask of oil, which fell upon the not yet dry painting, entirely obliterating the features of the Madonna. Irritated at the difficulty into which I had plunged both him and myself, the student sprang up and seized me by the throat; in a moment the Signore Luigi interfered, and compressing the youth's arm in his powerful grasp, forced him to release me.

"Remember, Carlo," he said gently, 'Antonelli is an old man.'

"He has ruined himself and me!" exclaimed the other, clasping his hands in despair; 'B—elli will discharge him without doubt, and me he will refuse to instruct any longer.'

"Perhaps there is yet an alternative," urged the Signore Luigi; 'B—elli will not return till to-morrow morning; much may be done in eighteen hours; I will strive to restore the face.'

"He immediately set to work; fortunately he paints with as much quickness as skill. When night drew near he dismissed us; through the long hours of darkness he laboured incessantly, pausing neither for sleep nor refreshment. With the earliest ray of dawn I was again at the studio: he was painting still, calm, earnest, grave, as is his wont, only appearing a little paler than usual; but such a work of art had grown beneath his hand, such a marvellous creation! the Madonna herself could not have appeared more lovely than was that heavenly face. It was completed ere B—elli arrived; when he beheld it he was amazed.

"What inspired hand has traced those features?" he demanded.

"The history was related to him. He once more examined the picture, then turning to the Signore, who stood near with folded arms,

gazing on the other's excitement with an air of cold indifference, he exclaimed in a tone of mingled admiration and rage, 'Go, I can teach thee no longer; it is thou shouldst be the master.'

"The Signore took him at his word. He engaged these painting rooms, arranged with B—elli that I should accompany him, and is now the first painter in Italy as to talent, and when his execution is a little more perfected—ah! *se ne saprà qualche cosa*, we shall see how men will talk of him!"

"And the head was very lovely, was it? what style of face was it?" inquired Laura.

"How can I tell you? it was perfection, *vi bisognava vederla*," was the enthusiastic reply. "Stay," he continued, glancing at the clock, which now only wanted ten minutes to five; "I have an idea; there is yet time, but you must never relate that you have beheld it. Here, follow me;" and drawing out a key, he unlocked a door leading into a small apartment, comfortably though simply furnished, and fitted up with bookshelves somewhat after the fashion of an English study. "Ecco!" resumed Antonelli, "he has again sketched the head, but the subject is different. He will not allow me to place this picture in the studio, though it is such a gem I could sell it for a large price."

As he spoke he drew back a curtain, and the light fell upon a small picture painted with greater care, and more elaborately finished than any which Laura had yet seen. It represented a girl of exquisite beauty in a kneeling attitude, with her arms flung sportively around the neck of a magnificent dog, her golden tresses falling over and mingling with the waves of his shaggy coat.

As Laura gazed her colour went and came quickly, and her eyes seemed to grow to the canvas: both girl and dog were portraits done to the life, and she recognised each of them immediately—her wild conjecture was then the truth!—her determination was instantly taken. Seating herself as if to examine the picture more nearly, she contrived by one or two artful questions to set the garrulous old man talking again, and forgetful of the flight of moments, drew him on to relate to her how the Signore had discovered that his youngest born, the son of his old age, possessed a talent for painting, and how the Signore was giving him lessons, and the talent was daily developing under such favourable circumstances, until the old man had begun to hope that the boy might succeed better than his father had done, and retrieve the shipwrecked fortunes of the Antonellis.

While he was yet in the midst of his recital the clock struck five, and almost at the same moment a quick, active footstep was heard bounding up the staircase, and the deep tones of a man's voice exclaimed—

"Antonelli, Antonelli, dove sei buon amico?"

With a horror-stricken glance at his companion, the old man was about to rush precipitately out of the room, when Laura, quietly laying her hand upon his arm, said—

"There is nothing to be alarmed about! *bisogna ch'io gli parli*—tell the Signore that an old friend is waiting to see him."

As she spoke a tall, graceful figure appeared at the door of the study,

and stopped in amazement on perceiving how it was tenanted. In no way embarrassed by the situation in which she found herself, Laura rose from her seat with the same degree of quiet, courteous, self-possession with which she would have received a guest in her own drawing-room, and advancing towards the new-comer, said, holding out her hand—

“Your kindness will pardon the little stratagem by which I have sought to verify my conjecture, that in Signore Luigi I should have the pleasure of recognising an old friend.”

“Leave us, Antonelli,” exclaimed his employer sternly; then carefully closing the door, he turned towards his guest, and bowing coldly, inquired, “To what am I indebted for the honour of a visit from Mrs. Leicester?”

“To the fact that I was vain enough to fancy the pleasure I feel in meeting an old friend might be mutual; and that Mr. Arundel would not resent the liberty I have taken in disregarding the regulations of the famous Signore Luigi; if I am so unfortunate as to have committed a mistake, it is soon remedied,” she continued quickly, finding that Lewis—(as we have not intended any but the most transparent mystification in regard to the identity of the painter and our hero, we may as well call him by his proper name)—remained silent; as she spoke she rose and advanced towards the door. Her look and words recalled Lewis’s wandering thoughts; he took her hand, reconducted her to her seat, and then in a tone of deep feeling said—

“Forgive me! but you do not, cannot know the train of overpowering memories your sudden appearance called up; indeed I am glad again to look upon the face of an old friend, since you accord me the privilege of so considering you—glad as a two years’ exile from all who ever knew or cared for him can make a man.”

“Is it so long since you quitted England?” inquired Laura.

“It is,” was the reply. Lewis paused, and then continued: “I left England under circumstances which caused me great mental suffering—suffering which time and a complete change of scene could alone render less bitter. I travelled for five months, passing through Greece and visiting Constantinople; at the expiration of that period I wandered hither, my vigour of mind and body in great measure restored. The wonders of this country revived my enthusiasm for art; this, and the necessity of following some profession, led me to the idea of adopting the career of a painter. For a year I worked ten hours daily in the studio of Signore B—elli, at the end of that period I quitted him and commenced painting on my own account; hitherto my success has surpassed my most sanguine expectations, so that I trust I have at last hit upon my true vocation.”

“I am so delighted to hear it!” exclaimed Laura warmly; “but how is it we have seen nothing of you before—did you not hear of our arrival? we have been here more than a month!”

Lewis coloured, bit his lip, and then replied, “My recollections of England were so painful that I resolved, partly for that reason, partly that I might keep my mind free from any anxieties which could interfere with my devoting my faculties fully and entirely to my new

profession, to avoid the society of the few English who were likely to come in my way; indeed, my only associates have been the young artists with whom I became acquainted in the studio of B—elli, and the family of the worthy old man who acts as my assistant."

"But you will make us exceptions to the rule?" pleaded Laura; "Charles will be really hurt if you refuse to come to us." Lewis paused, his impulse was to refuse, but there was a genuine kindness in Laura's manner which vouched for her sincerity; had she been a man he would have adhered to his resolution, but it was not easy to say *no* to Laura.

"Forgive my apparent churlishness," he began, "but may I ask whether you have any of—of your English friends staying with you?"

"Not at present; Charles and I are leading a quiet, humdrum Darby and Joan life, which need not alarm even your hermit-like habits. You must promise to dine with us to-morrow at six."

"You are most good-natured to humour what must appear to you my absurd caprices," replied Lewis, touched by her thoughtful kindness.

"But you will come?" she said, holding out her hand to him.

Lewis took it in his own, and pressed it warmly as he replied, "Nobody could resist such gentle pleading."

At this moment the door was flung open, and Charles Leicester burst in, looking more puzzled, excited, and angry than he had ever been known to do in the previous course of his existence; while Antonelli, vociferating eagerly in Italian and broken English, was vainly endeavouring to detain him.

CHAPTER LV.

IS DECIDEDLY ORIGINAL, AS IT DISPLAYS MATRIMONY IN A MORE FAVOURABLE LIGHT THAN COURTSHIP.

THE Honourable Charles Leicester was, take him all in all, about as easy-tempered a fellow as ever breathed; but when old Antonelli informed him that his young and pretty wife was closeted with a mysterious stranger, at the same time positively refusing to allow him to enter the apartment in which they were shut up together, even he considered that it was time to exert himself; so seizing the old man by the arm and swinging him round with a degree of energy which greatly discomposed that worthy cicerone, he threw open the door, and staring with an angry and bewildered gaze into the dimly-lighted room, discovered, to his horror and disgust, Laura quietly sitting with her hand clasped in that of a handsome young Italian, for such did Lewis at first sight appear. The period which had elapsed since Leicester had last seen him had produced so marked a change in his appearance, that meeting him for the first time under circumstances so utterly disconnected with all former associations, he might well deem he was addressing a total stranger. Lewis's pale features had regained in a great degree their look of health, and exposure to a southern sun

had converted the delicate complexion into a manly brown, while, having allowed his moustaches and even a short curly beard to grow, the lower part of his face was enveloped in a mass of glossy black hair; this, and the stern, thoughtful expression of his countenance, caused him to look at least five years older than he really was. He rose as Leicester entered and advanced a step towards him; then, seeing that the other did not in the slightest degree recognise him, he paused and exchanged a smiling glance with Laura as he marked Charley's puzzled, angry expression.

Laura, entering thoroughly into the absurdity of the situation, determined to improve it to the uttermost; returning Lewis's glance with a look into which she contrived to throw an amount of tenderness that by no means soothed her husband's irritation, she began—

"Ah, Charles, let me introduce you; you will be delighted to hear that Signore Luigi has kindly promised to dine with us to-morrow."

"The deuce he has!" muttered Leicester to himself; "he might have waited till I had asked him, I think;" then acknowledging the introduction by a freezing little bow, he continued aloud—

"Now, my dear Laura, we must really be going;" then crossing to the place where his wife was seated, he held out his arm with the evident intention of linking hers with it and walking her off forthwith.

But Laura clearly disapproved of such precipitation; for without showing the slightest disposition to move, she replied—

"Restrain your impatience a few minutes longer, Mr. Leicester. Having formed so agreeable an acquaintance," she continued, glancing at Lewis, "you really must allow me time to prosecute it."

It was not in Charles Leicester's nature to be angry with any one for five minutes consecutively; with his wife, whom he idolised, it was utterly impossible; so, making up his mind that Luigi was a kind of lion, to be regarded in the light of an exhibition, and stared at and fed accordingly, and that Laura's sudden fancy for him was only an instance of womanly caprice—"women always went mad about celebrities," he knew—he made a short, penitent, civil speech, and then flung himself lazily into a chair, with a look of half-bored, half-sulky resignation, which, under the circumstances, was perfectly irresistible.

That his two companions found it so was evidenced by their simultaneously bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, increased to an alarming degree by the look of blank astonishment that came over Leicester's face at their incomprehensible conduct.

As soon as Laura could recover breath she began, "Why, Charley, you dear, good-natured, stupid old thing! don't you see who it is yet?"

At the same moment the Mysterious One approached him, saying, "Have you quite forgotten the existence of Lewis Arundel?"

For a moment Charley gazed in half-sceptical astonishment, and then seizing his hand, and shaking it as if he were anxious to make up for his dulness by dislocating his friend's shoulder, he exclaimed, "My dear fellow, I'm delighted to see you—I really am quite ashamed of

myself—but, 'pon my word, you've made yourself look so particularly unlike yourself, and the whole thing altogether is so very strange and unexpected, and more like an incident in a novel than a real *bona-fide* transaction of every-day life, that you must hold me excused. My dear Laura, I began to think you were gone out of your senses, and that I should have to procure a keeper for you. Why, Arundel, then you've turned out a genius after all, a second Michael Angelo, eh! I prophesied you would, if you remember, that day when you painted the cow?"

As he spoke he stooped to pick up his cane and gloves, which in the excitement of the discovery he had allowed to drop; consequently he did not perceive the effect his words had produced upon Lewis. *Did* he remember the incident to which Leicester had alluded? Would to heaven he could forget that which was branded on his memory as with a red-hot iron, the fact that on the day in question he had for the first time beheld Annie Grant! He turned pale—the blood seemed to rush back upon his heart, and oppress him with a feeling of suffocation—he was forced to lean against a table for support.

These signs of emotion were not lost upon Laura's quick eye, and rising at the moment to divert her husband's attention, she observed, "Now I have at length succeeded in enlightening your understanding, Charley dear, I am quite at your service."

"Come along then," was the reply; "you'll dine with us to-morrow without fail, Signore Luigi, *alias* Arundel, you polyglot mystery. 'Pon my word, it's the oddest coincidence I ever knew, exactly like a thing in a play, where everybody turns out to be somebody else. Come along, Laura; I must try and conciliate your old friend the cicerone, too, for I swung him round in my wrath most viciously; I hope I have not dislocated any of his venerable joints; I got the steam up to no end of a height, I can tell you, when I fancied I had lost my love. By-by, *al piacere di rivederla, Signore.*" Thus running on, Charley Leicester tucked his wife under his arm, and having handsomely rewarded Antonelli, departed.

In the course of their walk home, Laura, after her husband had again and again expressed his astonishment at the denouement which had just taken place, inquired, "You never clearly made out the reason why Mr. Arundel quitted Broadhurst, did you, Charley?"

"No! Bellefield hinted in his way, which gives one an impression without one's exactly knowing what grounds one has for taking it up, that Arundel had misconducted himself in some manner; but the General's letter quite contradicted such an idea, and spoke of him in the very highest terms. I thought nothing of what Bellefield said, for they never liked one another, and *entre nous*, I consider Belle behaved shamefully to him on one or two occasions."

Laura paused for a minute in thought, and then inquired, "What did the remark you made about sketching a cow refer to?"

"Oh! did I never tell you that?" returned Charles, laughing; "the incident occurred on the occasion of his first introduction to the Grant family;" and then he proceeded to give her a full, true, and particular

account of the interesting adventure, with which the reader is already acquainted. As he concluded, Laura observed—

“In fact, then, he beheld for the first time Annie Grant. Now I can guess why he turned pale when you referred to it: Charley, you must be very careful how you say anything about the Broadhurst party before him.”

“Eh! and wherefore, oh wise little woman, endowed with an unlimited power of seeing into milestones?” was the bantering reply.

“Well, if I tell you, you must promise never to mention the idea, for it is only an idea, to anybody till I give you leave,” returned Laura.

Charley compressed his lips, and went through a pantomimic representation of sewing them together.

“Nay, but I’m serious,” resumed Laura; “if I tell you, you must be careful, and not blunder it out in any of your absent fits; do you promise?”

“I’ll do more than promise,” returned her husband energetically; “I’ll swear by all

The heathen gods and goddesses,
Without skirts and bodices,

never to reveal to mortal ear the fatal secret—so let us have it!”

“Well then, if you must know, I suspect Mr. Arundel to have had better taste than you, and not to have escaped with a whole heart from the fascinations of Annie Grant.”

“Phew—!” replied Leicester, giving vent to a prolonged whistle indicative of intense surprise; “that is the state of the case, eh? then my allusion to the cow was just about the most unlucky topic I could have hit upon. I certainly have a genius for putting my foot in it, whenever circumstances afford an aperture for the insertion of that extremity. I should not wonder if that idea of yours, always supposing it to be correct, might explain his sudden departure from Broadhurst, and account for this strange freak of expatriating himself and starting as a second-hand modern Michael Angelo. I say, Laura, suppose the fancy should happen to be mutual, Bellefield may have had more cause for disliking Arundel than people were aware of.”

“She would never have accepted your brother if she knew that another loved her, and felt that she returned his affection; Annie is too good and true-hearted for that,” returned Laura warmly.

“Time will show,” replied Leicester. “I only hope it may not be so; for between Arundel and Belle I should not know how to act. Belle is my brother, and to Arundel’s good advice I shall always consider I am in great measure indebted for a certain plague of my life—(without whose plaguing the said life wouldn’t be worth having, all the same);—the only course I can take, if our suspicions prove true, will be to preserve a strict neutrality.”

“And how would you wish me to act, Charley dear?” inquired Laura, taking her husband’s fingers caressingly between her own soft, white little hands. “You know I can’t recommend Annie to marry your brother if she does not love him.”

“Follow the dictates of your own good sense and kind heart,

darling, and you will be sure to do rightly. I have the most perfect confidence in you, and would not influence you one way or another, if I could."

The tears rose to Laura's eyes at this fresh proof of her husband's affection; and as she reflected on what he had said in regard to Lewis's share in bringing them together, she inwardly vowed that if ever it lay in her power to do him a similar good turn, she would not be slotbful in advancing his interests.

True to his promise, Lewis dined with them the next day; by mutual consent all reference to the past was avoided, and no allusion made to any of the Broadhurst party. As soon as Lewis found this to be the case, a certain proud embarrassment observable in his manner disappeared; and yielding to the delight of again finding himself in congenial society, he unconsciously displayed his brilliant conversational powers—relating, with playful wit, or forcible and striking illustration, the adventures which had befallen him, and the scenery he had beheld in his late pedestrian tour, till Charles and Laura, who had only been acquainted with him when the cloud of his dependent position at Broadhurst hung over him and concealed his natural character beneath a veil of proud reserve, were equally delighted and astonished; and when, late in the evening, he took his departure, they vied with each other in performing a duet to his praise.

"He talks so well!" exclaimed Charley.

"He knows so much!" cried Laura.

"He has been everywhere," continued the former.

"And done everything," resumed the latter.

"He is so clever and epigrammatic," urged the gentleman.

"And his descriptions of scenery are so poetical," put in the lady.

"His figure is so striking," said the master.

"And his face so handsome," rejoined the mistress.

"What a pair of eyes he has!"

"And such a smile!"

"Then his moustaches and whiskers are irreproachable."

"And his hands whiter than mine."

"In fact, he is a stunner!" declared the baritone.

"Though I detest slang, I must confess that he is," chimed in the soprano.

"If I were a woman I should be over head and ears in love with him," suggested Charley.

"I am both the one and the other," responded his wife, casting an arch glance at her spouse, as much as to say, "How do you like that?" which rebellious speech her lord and master punished by stopping her mouth with—the only remedy we believe ever to have been found effectual in such a case.

From that time forth Lewis became a constant visitor at the Palazzo Grassini, and at last completed his triumph over Laura's affections by asking, as a favour, to be allowed to take a sketch of "Tarley"; "he wanted a study of a child's head so much." Then the sketch was pronounced so successful that nothing would serve but that it must

be perpetuated in oils, and as the possibility of making "Tarley" sit still long enough for such a purpose did not exist unless Laura sat also, Lewis consented to paint them together, although he had hitherto steadily refused to take a portrait, in spite of large sums which had been offered him to do so.

Laura received a second epistle from Annie Grant postponing their visit for another fortnight. Her father had all along expected Miss Livingstone would accompany them as a matter of course; but when it came to the point that redoubtable spinster broke into open revolt, asserted her independence, nailed her colours to the mast, and determined upon death or victory. So resolute was she, that after a most obstinate engagement with sharp tongues, which followed upon two days of sulky silence, the General was forced to make terms and yield his own will to that of a woman; so Minerva remained behind to garrison Broadhurst. As, however, the General by no means approved of his daughter travelling without some female companion, the journey was very nearly being given up, when, at the last moment, a lady, the wife of an Austrian officer quartered at Venice, was discovered, who, seeking for an escort to enable her to join her husband, was only too happy to be allowed to accompany the Grant party. These delays, however, would necessarily retard their arrival for at least a fortnight. Days passed away; the picture (and a very pretty one it was) of the fair young mother and her little, rosy, merry child, advanced towards completion, and Lewis began to look forward with a feeling almost akin to regret, to the time when the sittings, and the agreeable, friendly conversations to which they gave rise, would be at an end.

Since he had quitted England his thoughts and feelings had undergone various and considerable changes; at first he had striven, in the excitement of active adventure, to banish recollection, and after a time he succeeded so far as to take a lively interest in all he saw. The revolutionary spirit, which has since produced such changes in modern Europe, was then beginning to show itself, and he witnessed the outbreak of a rather serious *émeute* in one of the German States, in which he contrived to get mixed up, and by these means he came in for a couple of day's hard fighting, and a week of intense fatigue and excitement. This, paradoxical as it may appear, was of the greatest psychological assistance to him; it roused him effectually, and took him completely out of himself. The excitement was kept up for some little time longer, for, owing to the part which his old student associations had led him to take in the affair, he brought upon himself the suspicions of the Prussian government, and the next event of his tour was in fact a flight to save himself from arrest. During this period he was accompanied by a young German, who, much more deeply implicated in the affair than Lewis had been, dreaded that his capture might lead to his execution; and unwilling to atone for his patriotism with his life, he and his companion hurried from the scene of their exploits, experiencing innumerable dangers, difficulties, and hair-breadth escapes, ere they arrived at that sanctuary for political refugees, the city of the Sultan. Having by these means regained his

energy and vigour of mind, Lewis applied himself heart and soul to the study of his new profession, and in the interest of the pursuit kept his powers, mental and bodily, so fully employed as to hold memory at bay, and to require neither society nor sympathy. But now a change had again come o'er him; he had in great measure mastered the difficulties of his art, he had solved the problem whether by his talent he could secure a competency for himself and those belonging to him; constant and indefatigable labour was no longer an obligation, and ere the Leicesters discovered him he had begun to feel, though he would scarcely acknowledge it even to himself, the want of those social ties from which, in his first frenzy of grief, he had voluntarily separated himself. In the society of the Leicesters he obtained exactly the amount of relaxation which he required—Laura appreciated and understood him, Charles, without understanding, liked him; while on his part, the lady's society interested and soothed him, and that of her husband afforded him amusement and companionship.

As the day approached on which the Broadhurst party were expected to arrive, Laura became considerably perplexed as to how she might best break the matter to Lewis: she had once, by way of experiment, mentioned to her husband, in Lewis's presence, the fact that she had received a letter from Broadhurst, and the start he gave at the name, the death-like paleness which overspread his countenance, the quivering lip, and clenched hand, told of such deep mental suffering, that, frightened at the effects she had produced, Laura immediately changed the subject and had never again ventured to allude to it.

The last sitting for the picture chanced to be fixed for the very morning before that on which the Grants were expected to arrive. Laura consulted her husband as to the affair: Charley stroked his chin, caressed his whiskers, gazed vacantly at himself in the chimney-glass, and then, putting on a look of sapient self-confidence, in regard to the reality whereof it was clear he entertained the strongest misgivings, he began in a thorough master-of-the-family tone—

"Why, it seems to me, my love, that the present is exactly one of those emergencies in which a woman's tact is the very thing required. I should advise you to feel your way with great caution, very great caution, and when by this means you have ascertained the best method of breaking it to him, I should speak at once without any further hesitation, and—and——"

"I think you had better undertake the business yourself, Charley dear, as you seem to have such a clearly defined idea how to set about it," interrupted Laura with a roguish smile.

"Not at all; by no means, my dear," replied Charley, speaking with unwonted energy. "A—in fact, so strongly do I feel that a *woman's* tact is the thing required, and that any interference of mine might ruin the whole affair, and, in short, bring about something very disagreeable, that I have made arrangements which will keep me from home during the whole morning, so as to leave you a clear field."

"Oh, you dreadfully transparent old impostor! a child of five years old could see through you," exclaimed Laura, laughing heartily at the

detected look which instantly stole over her husband's visage. "Now, if you don't honestly confess that you have not an idea how to get over the difficulty," she continued, "that you dread a scene with a true degree of masculine horror, and yet have not the most remote notion how to avoid one, I'll 'make arrangements which will take me from home all the morning,' and leave you to flounder through the affair as best you can."

"There is a vixen for you," exclaimed Charley, appealing to society at large. "Poor Socrates! I always had a deep commiseration for his domestic annoyances when I read of them at school, but I little dreamed that I should live to have personal experience of the miseries of possessing a Xantippe;" then throwing himself into a mock-tragic attitude, he ejaculated, "Ungrateful woman! I leave you to your fate;" and shaking his fist at her, pressed his hand to his forehead, and rushed distractedly out of the room—in less than two minutes he lounged in again, drawing on his gloves. "What a bore tight gloves are!" he murmured feebly—"here, Laura!" so saying, he seated himself by his wife's side, languidly holding out his hand, while with the most helpless air imaginable he allowed her to pull on the refractory gloves for him, which she did with a most amusing display of energy and perseverance.

"*Voilà, Monsieur!*" she said; "that herculean feat is accomplished. Have you aught else to command your slave?"

Charley regarded her with a look of affection as he replied, "What a blessing it is to have a good, clever little wife to do all the horrid things for one! Good-bye, my own! When you have done victimising Arundel with your alarming intelligence, ask him to dine with us to-day; I want particularly to talk to him. He knows the people here better than I do; but it strikes me the politics of the place are getting into a fix."

So saying, he imprinted a kiss upon her brow, admired his hand in the new, well-fitting glove, and sauntered out of the apartment as listlessly as though he were walking in his sleep.

Punctual to his appointment, Lewis arrived, looking so handsome and animated that Laura felt doubly grieved at having to make a communication which she was persuaded would tend to renew the memory of a grief against which he appeared to have struggled with some degree of success. Her task was rendered the more difficult from the conviction that Lewis's intercourse with her husband and herself had been of great service to him, by insensibly overcoming his misanthropic distaste to society. This intercourse, she feared, the tidings she was about to impart to him would effectually interrupt.

"Where is 'Tarley'?" inquired Lewis, after exchanging salutations with "*La Madre*."

"In the nursery, adorning for the sacrifice of his personal freedom during the period you may require him to remain *en position*," answered Laura; "shall I ring for him?"

"May I fetch him myself? I promised him a ride on my back for good conduct at the last sitting, and he must not be disappointed," urged Lewis in reply.

"Agreed—always promising that you take great care not to tumble the clean frock," returned Laura with a gratified smile. "Who could believe that man was the same creature who used to look so stern, and cold, and proud?" she added mentally, as Lewis departed on his mission; "he has as much tenderness of nature as any woman. If he really does love Annie, and she can prefer Lord Bellefield, she deserves all the unhappiness such a choice will inevitably bring upon her; her greatest enemy can wish her nothing worse. Well, 'Tarley,' are you going to sit still and be good?" she continued, as that self-willed juvenile entered, seated in triumph upon Lewis's shoulder, and grasping a lock of his horse's ebon mane the better to preserve his balance.

"Tarley" having signified in the very smallest broken English his intention to keep the peace to the best of his little ability, the sitting began in good earnest, and terminated, as far as that young gentleman was concerned, in less than an hour, during which period, as he only tore his mamma's gown once, made a hole in the sofa-cover, and had one violent fit of kicking, he may comparatively be considered (all things are comparative) to have kept his word. A few finishing touches still remained to complete Laura's portrait, and these Lewis hastened to add. The conversation (originating in "Tarley's" *escapades*) turned on education.

"The theory which I hold to be the true one is simple enough," remarked Lewis; "the first thing to inculcate is—oblige me by turning a little more to the light—implicit obedience; that once acquired—rather more still—you may, as the mind develops, occasionally give a reason for your commands—you see my object is to get a clearer light on the left eye-brow—thank you; don't move."

"But that obedience, to be of much avail, should be founded on other feelings than mere fear of punishment," returned Laura; "for that in sturdy minds produces obstinacy, in weak ones deceit and falsehood, and in both cases necessarily loses its effect as the pupil advances towards maturity. It always appears to me that in our conduct towards children we should strive to imitate (with reverence be it spoken) God's dealings towards ourselves. We should teach them to love and trust us, and obedience based on affection and faith will surely never fail for time or for eternity. Then," she continued, as Lewis, bending over his work, failed to reply, "I should endeavour to make their punishments appear as much as possible the natural consequences of their faults; for instance, I should allow them to experience to the uttermost the mental suffering caused by pride and anger, and in their cooler moments point out to them that it may be wise, as well as right, to suffer even injustice mildly, rather than bear the distress of mind a contrary line of conduct is sure to entail. I should impress upon them the evil of coveting by denying them the thing they so eagerly sought. In fact," she added hastily, fancying from her companion's silence that for some reason her conversation was distasteful to him, "I have a great many sapient, theoretical ideas in regard to education, but how they may turn out when I come to put them in practice remains to be proved."

Lewis, who during the conclusion of this speech had been painting away as zealously as if his life depended upon his exertions, though a close observer might have remarked, by his downcast eye and quivering lip, the effect Laura's words produced on him, replied earnestly—

“Would to Heaven all mothers felt as truly and wisely as you do about education; were children taught such principles of self-government as you propose, there would be fewer aching hearts among us.”

Having uttered these words and sighed deeply, he spoke no more until he had finished Laura's portrait.

“There,” he said, “I need detain you no longer; with the exception of a few touches to the drapery, which I can do at my own rooms, the picture is completed.”

Laura approached and duly admired it, declaring the likeness of “Tarley” to be perfect, but feeling quite certain Lewis had flattered her terribly, at which little touch of woman's nature the young artist smiled as he denied the accusation. And now the moment had arrived when Laura must break her intelligence to him as best she might. Her straightforward, simple nature disdained all subterfuge, and she began accordingly.

“There is a topic which, from a fear, perhaps uncalled for, of giving you pain, Charles and I have avoided, but which I am now compelled to mention to you. You asked me at our first meeting whether we were alone; after to-day we shall be so no longer, and the guests we expect are none other than your former pupil Walter, General Grant, and his daughter.” Laura had purposely placed herself in such a position that she could not see her companion's features as she made this communication, and the only sign of agitation which met her ear was the sound of his quick and laboured breathing.

After a moment's pause he said in a hurried, stern tone of voice, “I cannot meet them! it is impossible, I must leave this place directly.”

“Nay, that surely is unnecessary, no one here knows you but ourselves; you have only to resume your incognito, and in Signore Luigi, the Venetian painter, no one will recognise Lewis Arundel. We will keep your secret inviolably.”

“Can I rely on the discretion of Mr. Leicester?”

“Perfectly; if he knows you consider the matter important, he will remain silent as the grave.”

“Be it so then,” returned Lewis after a pause. Having paced up and down the room, he threw himself on a sofa, and covering his eyes with his hand, remained buried in painful thought.

Laura watched him with deep interest, till at length she could restrain the expression of her sympathy no longer.

“I *must* speak that which is in my mind,” she said earnestly. “I know that you are good and true-hearted, you *can* have done no wrong that you have cause to be ashamed of, why then do you fear to meet these people?”

Lewis started, raised his head, and flinging back his dark hair, exclaimed almost fiercely, “Did you say fear? I fear no living being!”

There is no man who can accuse me of evil-doing ; my name is as spotless as your own pure soul."

"Then why refuse to meet them?"

"Because I fear my own heart," was the vehement reply, "because I have sworn never to meet her again till I have learned to look upon her with the indifference her weak fickleness deserves, and that," he added bitterly, "will not be till grey hairs bring insensibility to woman's love and such-like gilded toys, or till she has crushed out the last germs of my lingering madness by marrying the heartless scoundrel to whom she is engaged." He paused, and then continued more calmly, "You ask me why I refuse to meet these people ; hear the truth, and then judge for yourself whether I can meet them ; nay, judge for me also if you will, for I am half-frenzied by the anguish I have suffered, and am as incapable to decide for myself in this affair as a child, such puppets are we to our loves and hates ;" and then in eager, hurried accent he told her of his love for Annie Grant, his struggle for self-conquest, his signal failure, his fearful hope that she returned his affection, the parting, his confession to the General, the strange tidings he had learned in London, and then the cruel paralysing blow of Annie's engagement, renewed the very day after he had left Broadhurst, believing on no slight grounds that she loved him and him only. All the burning sorrow, pent for two long years within his secret soul, he poured forth before her ; and Laura listened with glowing cheeks and tearful eyes, and a growing resolve in her brave, pure heart to set aside all conventionalisms and every hollow form of society, and if Annie should but prove worthy of him, to labour with all the energy of her earnest nature to bring these young, sad, loving hearts together again.

CHAPTER LVI.

LEWIS ATTENDS AN EVENING PARTY, AND NARROWLY ESCAPES BEING "CUT" BY AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"Now listen to me, and be good, and sensible, and tractable for once in your life," exclaimed Laura, when Lewis's agitation had in some degree subsided. "You appear to have acted with more than sufficient self-will and impetuosity all through this affair, and the result has not proved so satisfactory as to justify you in refusing a friend's advice and assistance. Excuse my plain speaking," she continued, with a frank smile which would have thawed the moroseness of the most churlish misanthrope who ever reversed the precepts of Christianity by hating his neighbour, "but I must either say all I think or be wholly silent. Besides, it is no kindness to hide the truth from you."

"What would you have me do?" returned Lewis sadly. "Believe me, I reproach myself for my past folly more bitterly than you could do were you my worst enemy, instead of the gentle, zealous friend you are."

"I would not have you at present do anything, more especially anything rash," returned Laura, "but simply leave the matter in my hands."

"Promise me——" began Lewis.

"I promise you I will do nothing which can in the smallest degree compromise your honour, or even your pride," returned Laura, with the slightest possible degree of sarcasm in her tone; "beyond this I will promise you nothing, and if you have not sufficient faith to trust my friendship thus far, you are less worthy of it than I have deemed you."

Lewis glanced with mingled surprise and admiration at the animated features of his spirited confidante. Accustomed to Rose's calm, persuasive reasoning, and the half-earnest, half-playful, but wholly bewitching manners of sweet Annie Grant, Laura's keen wit and fearless bearing surprised and pleased, while at the same time they insensibly influenced him. "I *will* trust you," he said; "you have the strong sense and bold energy of a man's mind united with all the gentleness and refinement which are woman's especial attributes. I will and do trust you fully. But alas! dear friend," he continued sorrowfully, "neither you nor any one else can remove the cause of my unhappiness. I will not attempt to deceive you or myself; despite my best endeavours to forget her I cannot, and I am miserable. I, who deemed myself so strong, am powerless to cast this affection from me; and though I despise her for her weak fickleness, though I scorn her for allowing herself to be contracted to that man of whom I never can bear to think as the brother of your kind-hearted, liberal-minded husband, I yet love her with the reasonless passion of an idiot."

"You take too gloomy a view of the affair. She may not be so much to blame as you imagine; she may yet prove worthy of your affection," urged Laura.

"Would to Heaven it could be so!" exclaimed Lewis vehemently. "You bid me consider the matter calmly and sensibly," he continued, after a pause; "by doing so I perceive the hopes with which you would fain inspire me to be unreasonable and delusive. Facts speak for themselves, and as they remain unalterable, so must my grief. Either she does not return my affection, and is attached to her intended bridegroom, or, loving me, she has with the most culpable weakness allowed herself to be persuaded into an engagement with a man every way unworthy of her, to whom she is, to say the least, indifferent; and this, not in consequence of a lengthened persecution, but within twenty-four hours after I have left her, fondly deeming that had fate allowed me to ask her hand she would not have refused it."

"It is very strange, very unaccountable," returned Laura, musing, "so much so, indeed, that I feel sure we do not yet know the whole truth, and that there must be some way of explaining her conduct satisfactorily."

Lewis shook his head mournfully.

"Farewell," he said; "you will soon be able to judge for yourself, and will find that the view I take of the affair, gloomy as it may appear, is indeed the only true one."

"You will dine with us to-day? Charles particularly wishes it; you must not refuse. Remember, it will be the last time for some weeks that I may have an opportunity of seeing you!" pleaded Laura,

"I do not know why I consent, except that it seems impossible to say no to you," returned Lewis, unable to resist the influence of Laura's sympathetic kindness. "You will find me but a dull companion," he continued with a deep sigh, "for your intelligence has completely unmanned me."

"We will take the chance of that," replied Laura with an incredulous smile; and so, shaking hands, they parted.

The dinner passed off heavily enough. Lewis, despite his efforts to the contrary, appeared out of spirits and *distract*. Charles, having been cautioned and tutored to the utmost extent of female foresight as to what he was to say and what to avoid, grew nervous and puzzled; called Laura, Annie, and asked Lewis why he did not send for Miss Grant (meaning his, Lewis's, sister Rose) to live with him and keep his house; by which blunders he provoked his wife to such a degree that she could have found in her heart to box his ears for him, without the smallest compunction. The arrival of "Tarley" and the dessert produced a marked improvement, that young gentleman being in the highest possible state of health and spirits, and influenced by a strong determination to partake of everything on the table, wine included, to ignore all established precedents as to eating jam by the intervention of a spoon, to consider walnuts appropriate missiles to throw at the company generally, and the cut-glass decanters in particular, to set maternal authority at defiance, as evinced by a resolution to pull off his left shoe and imbed it in orange marmalade, and in fact to do everything which appeared good in his eyes and naughty in those of his elders, and then and there to make a night of it. These little antics, at first amusing, and secretly patronised and fostered by Charles and Lewis, soon becoming tiresome, and at length unbearable, Laura asserted her prerogative, and disregarding much kicking and a hysterical affection, which was neither laughing nor crying, but a compound of the two, succeeded in carrying away her unruly offspring. When the gentlemen were left to themselves, Leicester, filling his glass and handing the bottle to Lewis, began—

"Do you mix much with the young men of the place, so as to judge of their political bias at all?"

"I am acquainted with some dozen, or more, young artists, though I do not enter much into their pursuits, from want of inclination; although, at first, they pressed me to belong to their clubs. I should say, however, judging from their conversation, that democratic principles were rife among them."

"I fear so; indeed, from information we have received, I should not be surprised if some attempt were likely to be made to throw off the Austrian yoke."

"Surely that would be great folly," returned Lewis; "with the troops and resources the Governor, Count Palffy, has at his command, any popular tumult might easily be quelled. It is only from cowardice or inaction on the part of the authorities that any of these successes in Northern Italy have been achieved."

"Ay, but inaction is just what I fear," rejoined Leicester; "the Austrians will not believe in the amount of popular disaffection which

exists ; they will go on ignoring the danger till the moment at which it could be most successfully combated has escaped them. Not that I care very much about the matter ; I am neither Trojan nor Tyrian ; but I am anxious to gain some certainty as to the chance of a popular outbreak, that I may take measures to provide for the safety of Laura and the child : besides, I think you are aware we have some guests coming to us ; had I known this sooner I should have written to them to postpone their visit till some more favourable opportunity."

"I will investigate the matter," returned Lewis eagerly, "and will communicate to you any information I may obtain ; women should never be exposed to the chance of witnessing the horrors of street warfare."

After conversing on this topic for some minutes longer, the gentlemen, being neither of them addicted to the practice of wine-bibbing, followed Laura to the drawing-room. Lewis appeared silent and depressed, and a gloom hung over the little party which no effort on the part of the hostess could dispel.

Soon after ten o'clock their guest rose to take leave.

"I shall send Charles to you very often ; and if possible, without attracting attention, I shall occasionally come with him," observed Laura ; "so mind you are not to freeze up again into a marble misanthrope : I consider I have improved you vastly since you have been under my tuition, and I by no means desire to have laboured in vain."

"You have shown me kindness which I may never be able to repay," answered Lewis ; "but to prove that I neither forget nor feel ungrateful for it, I will struggle against the faults you so justly reprobate : if I sometimes fail, you must remember that it is difficult to preserve a cheerful, easy manner with an aching heart, and so pardon me."

Having taken a cordial leave of his host and hostess, and refused Charles's offer of walking home with him, partly because he knew it would be an act of self-denial in his friend to relinquish his wife's society, partly because he wished to be alone, Lewis quitted the Palazzo Grassini and strolled on in the direction of his own abode. As he passed under the Piazza of St. Mark, a particularly beautiful effect of moonlight on the opposite buildings struck him, and leaning against one of the columns, he paused to observe it. The place where he was standing was in deep shadow, and to any one approaching from the left his figure was invisible, the massive column effectually hiding it. Having thoroughly fixed in his recollection the appearance which had attracted him, and which he proposed to transfer to canvas, he was about to quit the Piazza when a figure wrapped in a dark mantle advanced with a quick yet stealthy tread.

As the new-comer approached the spot where Lewis was stationed a low whistle pierced the air, and immediately a second figure, also disguised in a dark robe, appeared from behind a pillar which had hitherto concealed him, and addressing the other, observed—

"You are late ; I have waited for you."

"The delay was unavoidable, Signor," was the reply ; "I was forced

to wait myself for Paulo, as until I had seen him I could not bring you the pass-word."

"And what is it?" inquired the first speaker eagerly. The other glanced round with a suspicious air as he replied, "*I Martiri di Cosenza.*"¹

"Good!" was the rejoinder; "and the place of meeting?"

"The great Hall of the Palazzo —iani," naming one of the many ruined palaces which are to be found in Venice.

"Wisely chosen," observed the first speaker, who appeared of a rank superior to that of his companion; "the time of meeting must be at hand?"

"If Vossignoria proceeds thither leisurely, the hour will strike as you reach the appointed rendezvous."

"'Tis well," was the reply. "Now leave me; we must not be seen together."

The person addressed raised his cap as a token of respect, and turning, hurried from the spot—his confederate paused a moment as if in deliberation, and then strolled leisurely away in the direction of the Palazzo —iani. Lewis waited till the echoes of his retreating footsteps died away in the distance, then starting in the direction of his own dwelling, he walked with rapid strides till he reached the corner of one of the less-frequented streets; having done so, he struck down it, running at a pace which few could have kept up with till he approached his own house, when he again moderated his speed. Letting himself in with a private key, he entered his sitting-room, took a brace of small pistols from a drawer, loaded them carefully, and concealing them in a breast-pocket, flung a dark cloak over his shoulders and again quitted the room. His determination was taken. Accident having put him in possession of the time and place of some secret meeting, as well as the pass-word which he doubted not would ensure his admission, his love of adventure occasioned him instantly to resolve to be present at it. The assembly was doubtless of a political nature, and besides gratifying his taste for excitement, he might obtain some information in regard to the probability of a popular insurrection, and thus satisfy Leicester's anxiety for the safety of his wife and child—in which (though Lewis would not own the motive even to himself) might be involved that of Annie Grant. That the expedition he projected was a dangerous one he was well aware, but he trusted to chance and to his own tact and presence of mind to save him from discovery, and in case of these failing him, he possessed the pistols as a last resource. Twenty minutes' brisk walking brought him beneath the walls of the Palazzo —iani.

Pausing under the shadow of the building, he waited till he had seen two or three persons, carefully muffled up, proceeding in a particular direction. Conjecturing from their appearance and evident desire to escape observation that they were bound on the same errand as himself, he followed with a quick but noiseless step the next man who

¹ The brothers Bandiera, two youths of high Patrician Venetian descent, were denounced to the Austrian government, and shot as conspirators at Cosenza, June 25th, 1844.

passed. This person walked on rapidly till he reached a small archway; here he stopped and looked round, as if to assure himself that he was not followed, when, perceiving Lewis, he seemed embarrassed, and after a moment's deliberation, during which he scrutinised the young artist's figure narrowly, he stationed himself in the centre of the path, as if to intercept Lewis's further progress. As he approached the stranger advanced a step to meet him, observing in Italian—

"The Signor walks late, and chooses a strange path; may I venture to inquire his object in so doing?"

"The same as your own," returned Lewis sternly; adding in a tone of command, "We are too late already, lead the way."

The person thus addressed, in whom, from a slight peculiarity in his accent, Lewis recognised him who had appeared the inferior of the two speakers whose conversation he had overheard in the Piazza of St. Mark, seemed for a moment undecided how to act; and then, either deceived by Lewis's manner, or purposing to postpone any further investigation till he should obtain the assistance of the other conspirators, he passed through the archway, and turning abruptly to the right hand, ran up a flight of stone steps terminated by a low door closely studded with large iron nail heads. Giving a low whistle, some one from within partially opened the door and the stranger entered, followed by Lewis. The moment he had done so, the door was shut and bolted behind him, and he found himself in total darkness; at the same instant he felt his arms pinioned by a powerful grasp, while a gruff voice exclaimed—

"Give the pass-word!"

"*I Martiri di Cosenza*," replied Lewis firmly.

"Proceed," was the rejoinder, as the grasp was removed from his arms, and the light of a dark lantern was thrown along the narrow stone passage in which Lewis now found himself. Having traversed this, a second door opened at his approach, a rush of cold air streamed upon him, and he found himself in a large dimly-lighted chamber, in which were assembled somewhere about thirty persons, who were gathered round a long table, at the upper end of which stood a man, who, with his arm extended, and his whole bearing indicative of strong excitement, was addressing the meeting. Drawing the collar of his cloak more over his face, and choosing a spot where the shadow of one of the heavy columns which supported the roof served in some measure to conceal him, Lewis joined the group. As he did so, the speaker, glancing with flashing eyes round the assembly, exclaimed—

"We are resolved, then—the cup is full to overflowing—we will bow no longer beneath the yoke of foreign tyrants. Our brethren in Milan have set us a glorious example—the accursed Austrian already trembles before their valour. Italy has shaken off her lethargy;—we have only to be true to ourselves and to the glorious cause, and liberty awaits our efforts."

A subdued murmur of consent and approbation ran through the assembly, and the speaker continued—

"Thus agreed, then, it only remains for us to *act*, and our first duty is to succour those who have suffered for our sakes. Those heroes,

those martyrs to the cause of the Venetian people, Daniel Manin and Niccolo Tommaseo, languish in an unjust imprisonment; we will demand their liberation, and that with a voice that shall force the tyrants to listen—the voice of an awakened and indignant nation.”

As the speaker ceased, amidst a subdued buzz of approbation, a man in the dress of an artisan arose, and rolling his fierce blood-shot eyes around the assembly, exclaimed—

“Yes, brothers, we will liberate our brave compatriots—Manin and Tommaseo shall be set free to aid in the struggle for our liberty; but we must do more, Venice must rise and cast out those foreign butchers. A blow must be dealt which shall strike terror into their coward hearts; a blow which shall prove to them the fate they may expect, if they dare to oppress and withstand a people struggling for their freedom. And on whom can it so justly fall as on the arch-tyrant, sold hand and soul to Austria, thirsting only for vengeance and for murder—the base persecutor Marinovich?”

He paused; there was a moment's silence, and then a low whisper went round the assembly, “Death to Marinovich!” There was again a pause, and then men began to communicate with one another in deep muttered tones. After a short interval the first speaker, who had been writing rapidly, arose, and again addressing them, said—

“We are, then, agreed; and our first act shall be the liberation of Manin and Tommaseo. It is time that we disperse as silently and cautiously as may be; we must creep now that we may soar hereafter.”

In order not to interrupt the thread of our narrative, we have described the proceedings as they occurred—we must now revert to Lewis. During the delivery of the first speech he observed that the man who had addressed him as he entered, and who appeared a tall, muscular young fellow, had contrived to place himself by his side, and was regarding him from time to time with looks of mistrust and suspicion. At the proposal for the assassination of Colonel Marinovich, the commandant at the Arsenal, a man who, though a strict disciplinarian, Lewis knew by report to be a brave and gallant officer, he had been unable to repress some slight sign of disapprobation. As he did so he perceived a scowl pass across the features of his watcher, who took the opportunity of drawing yet nearer to him, while an accidental movement revealed the unpleasant fact that he held in his hand a naked stiletto. As the president ended his final address, Lewis, who had kept his eye fixed on the features of his dangerous neighbour, felt convinced that the man only awaited the termination of the business proceedings to denounce him to his fellow-conspirators. With his usual coolness and decision in moments of danger, Lewis saw that his only chance of safety lay in taking the initiative; accordingly, catching the man's eye, he fixed on him a piercing glance, as he said in a stern whisper—

“The first word you utter aloud you are a dead man;” at the same moment he presented the muzzle of a pistol within an inch of his ear. The man started slightly and attempted to increase the distance between them, but Lewis laid an iron grasp on his collar and detained

him; having stood for a moment irresolute, he said, in the same low whisper in which Lewis had addressed him—

“You are an Austrian spy.”

“I am not,” returned Lewis; “I am an Englishman.”

The other again started, regarded him fixedly, and then resumed—

“Swear by all you hold sacred never to reveal that which you have learned to-night.”

“I will swear nothing, except to blow out your brains if you attempt to speak or move without my permission,” was the stern, uncompromising rejoinder.

The stranger’s lip quivered and his grasp tightened on the stiletto, but he caught the glance of Lewis’s flashing eyes and felt that he was in earnest, and that his life hung upon a thread. The members of the secret association were by this time noiselessly gliding away in parties of two and three, and Lewis, fearing if he remained too long he might attract the attention of the president, who still continued writing at the table, determined to depart; accordingly, he said in a low whisper—

“Now we will go—precede me; but if I observe you attempt, by word or sign, to betray me, that moment I shoot you like a dog.”

The stranger, who seemed by this time sullenly to have resigned himself to his fate, or possibly to be reserving his strength for the execution of some scheme which he had devised for the future, obeyed in silence, and left the vault closely followed by Lewis, who still retained a firm grasp of his collar, although the ample folds of his cloak prevented the fact from being observed. In this manner they reached the door at the top of the stairs, and here were stationed two brawny-limbed, ruffianly-looking fellows, who acted in the double capacity of porter and sentry. Their attention, however, appeared solely directed to prevent the intrusion of any unwelcome visitant, the advisability of refusing egress to any one who had already passed their scrutiny never seeming to occur to them. This Lewis felt to be the deciding moment of his fate; once outside the gate he would be in comparative safety. Pressing the muzzle of the pistol against the back of his companion’s neck by way of a gentle hint, he muttered, “Remember!”

The young man shuddered slightly as the cold iron touched him, but made no reply. As they reached the gateway, the janitor stationed on the left side, addressing Lewis’s companion, made some inquiry in a low voice. Glancing round appealingly, as if to indicate that he was forced, even for their common safety, to reply, he spoke a few words in a dialect Lewis did not comprehend, when the gate-keeper respectfully held the wicket open and they passed out. And now once again Lewis felt that he was a free man, and he inwardly congratulated himself on having escaped so great peril, which congratulations were, as the event proved, somewhat premature.

Having descended the steps, Lewis loosened his hold on the stranger’s collar, saying carelessly, as he replaced his pistol in his breast—

“There, young gentleman; thanks to your prudence and my pre-

caution of bringing a brace of pistols with me, I have drawn my head out of the lion's mouth without having it bitten off for my pains. But now I want to have a little serious conversation with you."

"Wait till we are further from the Palazzo—iani, then," was the reply, in a voice that yet trembled from excitement or some other deep emotion; "we may be overheard; keep more in the shade of the buildings."

Suspecting no treachery, Lewis complied. Scarcely had he done so, however, when he fancied he heard a stealthy footstep following him, and turning abruptly, found himself face to face with a tall, savage-looking ruffian, who, armed with a naked stiletto, was evidently meditating mischief. Confused by his sudden motion, the fellow stood for a moment irresolute; not so his intended victim. The path along which he had been proceeding followed the course of one of the smaller *rii* or canals by which Venice is in so many directions intersected. Availing himself of this circumstance, Lewis rolled his cloak round his arm and sprang upon his assailant, parrying, with the shield thus constituted, a hasty and ineffectual stab which the other made at him. Foiled in his attempt, the ruffian drew back to avoid Lewis's onset, thereby approaching incautiously too near the bank of the canal. His antagonist was not slow to perceive the opportunity thus afforded him. Following up his retreating foe so as to prevent him from turning to perceive his danger, he waited till the man reached the brink of the canal, then stretching out his foot, he tripped him up, and parrying a second stab as he had done the former one, pushed him over the bank, which at that part was somewhat steep. A heavy fall and a loud splash in the water announced that his stratagem had succeeded, but at the same moment he felt his throat compressed by a powerful grasp, a naked stiletto flashed before him, and the eyes of the young conspirator, burning with hatred and revenge, glared at him through the darkness with the ferocity of those of some savage animal. Up to this point Lewis's courage and self-possession had never for a moment failed him, but now a strange, wild idea occurred to him, and a horrible dread suddenly overwhelmed him: his senses reeled, his limbs trembled, and for the first time in his life he experienced the mental agony of fear. Instinctively he seized the uplifted wrist of his assailant, and gazed with starting eye-balls at his face, on which the cold moonlight streamed. Yes! there could be no doubt: in the features of the being with whom he was engaged in deadly conflict he recognised a dark, shadowy, but most unmistakable resemblance to Hardy the poacher. Was it incipient madness, or was he thus horribly to be convinced of the reality of tales which he had hitherto deemed the mere drivellings of superstition?—could the dead indeed rise from their graves to seek vengeance on their slayers?

As these thoughts flashed meteor-like through his brain, his antagonist made a violent but ineffectual effort to free his wrist, and this action in great measure restored Lewis's self-possession. Ghosts had not thews and sinews, and even in that moment of peril a flush of shame at his childish terror spread over his brow, and the impulse

seemed to lend redoubled vigour to his frame. Consequently the struggle, though severe, was short. Superior in strength to his assailant, Lewis, having succeeded in wresting the dagger from his grasp, hurled it into the canal, leaving him completely unarmed and at his mercy. The stranger was the first to speak. Folding his arms across his breast with an air of dogged resolution, he said, speaking for the first time in English, and without the slightest foreign accent—

“You were wrong to throw away that weapon; it would have done your work as effectually and more silently than the pistol.”

“You consider your life as forfeit, then?” inquired Lewis.

“I expect you to do by me as I would have done by you,” was the concise reply.

“I am no assassin,” returned Lewis coldly; “and that reminds me of your worthy associate. You engaged my attention, so that I am ignorant whether he sank or swam.”

“Never fear for honest Jacopo,” was the answer; “he follows the calling of a gondolier when his stiletto is not in requisition, and can swim like a fish. Look yonder; he has gained the shore, and is even now watching us.”

As he spoke, Lewis observed a tall figure crouching under a projecting portion of the bank of the canal.

“He will not molest you further,” continued his late antagonist; “once foiled in his spring, like the tiger, he will not renew the attack. Had he slain you I should have paid him five *zwanzigers*; as it is, the poor fellow will only get his ducking for his pains.”

“Why did he follow us?” asked Lewis.

“When you entered I gave him a hint not to let you pass on your return; had he attempted to stop you, however, I believed you would shoot me, therefore, thinking I could obtain your death or capture without losing my own life, I gave him a glance by which he knew he was not to interrupt you. He then asked me in the thieves’ patois of this place what he was to do, and I told him to *follow us*, as you were a spy. You know the rest.”

Lewis paused for a moment, and then said abruptly, “You are an Englishman?”

“I am.”

“You will accompany me to my rooms,” rejoined Lewis; “I would question you further.”

“For what purpose?”

“That you will learn at the fitting time,” returned Lewis.

“What if I refuse?”

“I will summon the police, and if you attempt to escape, I will shoot you through the head,” was the stern rejoinder.

“I will go with you,” replied the stranger; “but I warn you I will not be arrested: my liberty is dear to me, my life I hold cheap—so cheap that even now, unarmed as I am, and unequal to you in muscular strength, I am tempted again to rush on you and try the chances of a death-struggle.”

“I would advise you not to do so,” returned Lewis calmly;

"besides," he added, "I may be more disposed to befriend you than you are aware of—it is with no hostile purpose I thus force you to accompany me, believe me."

"I will trust you," was the reply. "Your looks and words have, I know not why, a strange power over me—you must possess the gift of the *Malocchio*, which these Italians believe in—it was your glance, far more than your pistol, which kept me silent in the chamber of meeting."

During almost the whole of this conversation they had been walking side by side in the direction of the street in which Lewis's studio was situated, and in another five minutes they reached it.

"Have I your word of honour that you will not again attempt my life, or seek to escape till our interview is concluded?" asked Lewis.

"You have," was the concise reply.

"Follow me, then," continued Lewis; and drawing a key from his pocket, he unfastened the door, entered, closed it again, and accompanied by the stranger, led the way through the painting-room into his study.

CHAPTER LVII.

WALTER SEES A GHOST.

LEWIS, having lighted a powerful lamp by the aid of which he was accustomed to paint at night, was enabled to take a more particular survey of his new acquaintance than circumstances had yet permitted. He was a tall, powerfully-built stripling, with a dark complexion and handsome features, but although he could scarcely have numbered twenty years, his face wore a prematurely old expression, and there was a wild, reckless look in his eyes which told of a spirit ill at ease. He wore a sailor's dress, though the materials of which it was composed were of a finer quality than ordinary; he coldly refused the chair which Lewis offered him, and folding his arms across his breast, waited to be questioned. Lewis in the meantime took his seat at the table, placed the pistols on the desk before him, and fixing his piercing glance on the face of his captive, began—

"My knowledge of you is this: I find you an active and zealous member of a conspiracy to overthrow the Austrian Government in this city—one of a set of conspirators whose first act is to be the assassination of Colonel Marinovich, commandant of the Arsenal. As far as I am concerned, you first resolved to denounce me to your associates as a spy; foiled in that attempt, you incite an accomplice to murder me, and on his failure, use your best endeavours to stab me yourself; in the struggle I disarm you, and you find yourself in the power of the man for whose blood you have been thirsting. Even allowing, for the sake of argument, that you were justified in seeking the life of one who might betray your treasonous designs, you still remain a convicted conspirator, and my natural course would be to hand you over to the police; for your threat of never being taken alive is absurd, since you lost your stiletto I could have captured you at any moment I pleased. However, the fact of your being an Englishman

interests me in your behalf, and if you will answer my questions frankly and truly, I may be induced to let you off. In the first place, tell me who you are, and enough of your former life to enable me to understand how I find you thus plotting with foreigners with whom you can have no feelings in common, for an evil purpose."

"I can soon satisfy you, if that is all you require," was the reply. "My life has from its commencement been a curse to myself and to others. Wrong has produced wrong; I was badly brought up, and I have turned out badly; I am not the first that has done so, nor shall I be the last. At the age when most children are carefully trained to good, I was as sedulously instructed in evil. At twelve years old I could swear, game, and drink, and my instructors laughed to see the boy aping the vices of the man. My mother died in giving me birth; my father, I know not why, never loved me: he used me cruelly, and I hated him for it; so I left my home and worked for four years on board a man-of-war. At the end of that time the ship was paid off. Seeking pleasure, I fell into vicious company; squandered, and was robbed of my pay, and for some weeks I wandered a houseless beggar through London streets. The chance kindness of a stranger rescued me from that state of wretchedness"—a peculiar expression flitted across the features of his auditor as he mentioned the fact of his rescue from beggary; not observing it, he continued: "I then entered the merchant-service, and speedily rose to the rank of mate. The misery I had undergone rendered me more careful. I saved money, studied my profession, and hoped in time to become a captain of a merchantman. I embarked the whole of my savings in a trading speculation which would more than have doubled them, when the ship containing my property was wrecked. I was picked up by a vessel bound to this port, and was landed here again a beggar; and after trying in vain to procure any better situation, I have been forced to work in the arsenal as a common labourer to save myself from starvation. But even there my ill-fortune and the cruelty and injustice of men followed me. Peculation to a great extent was discovered amongst the workmen; I was examined before Colonel Marinovich; in vain I protested my innocence. God knows I have committed sins enough; but thieving and lying were never among them. However, I was condemned to receive forty lashes. Yes, sir; I, an Englishman, innocent of the crime of which I was accused, was beaten like a slave by the orders of a tyrannical foreigner; and now, perhaps, you can tell what took me to the meeting to-night? It was the hope of revenge, and there were others there with the same deadly purpose. The man who proposed the assassination of Marinovich was innocent as myself, and like me had smarted beneath the tyrant's lash. You by revealing this plot threatened to cheat us of our just revenge, and for that reason I would have sacrificed your life. And now you know my history, what will you do with me?"

There was a moment's pause ere Lewis, fixing his eyes on him with a clear, penetrating glance, said slowly and impressively, "There are a few minor particulars which appear to have escaped your memory; I will try to supply the deficiency. You were born in the village of

B——, in H—shire. Your early instructors in evil were the worthless characters who accompanied your father on his poaching expeditions. You left home because in a drunken mood your father struck you, and would not confess afterwards that he was sorry for so doing. You would have run away sooner but for your affection for your sister Jane. The stranger who rescued you from beggary was a young man who met you by chance at the door of a house in — Street, Russell Square; you begged of him in Italian; the merchant-ship in which you served, to whose commander he gave you an introduction, was the 'Beauty,' of Southsea, Captain Singleton, and your own name is Miles Hardy. Am I not correct in these particulars?"

When Lewis began speaking his companion's attention became riveted. As he proceeded his surprise grew deeper and deeper; but when he mentioned his name he sprang forward, and regarding him with wildly gleaming eyes, exclaimed, "Tell me, what are you? man or devil? who thus know every secret of my life."

"I am no devil," returned Lewis, smiling, "but a mortal like yourself; you have seen me before; look well at me; do you not recognise me?"

Thus appealed to, the young man carefully scanned his features, and then, in a low, besitating voice, rejoined, "You are, or I am much mistaken, the gentleman who rescued me from beggary."

"You are right," was the reply; "we are both much changed since that night, but I knew you at the moment you seized me by the throat."

"Thank God, I did not succeed in taking your life!" exclaimed Miles Hardy earnestly; "you are almost the only person who has ever shown me disinterested kindness; and how have I sought to repay it! Oh, sir, can you forgive me?"

"The simple fact that you did not recognise me exonerates you from the charge of ingratitude, my poor fellow," returned Lewis kindly; "but now sit down. Ere I can explain to you how I gained the knowledge which has so much surprised you, you have a long tale to listen to, and one which will cause you much sorrow. You turn pale; wait, I will get you a glass of wine."

"It is nothing," was the reply; "I have fasted long; it will pass away in a moment;" but as he spoke he sank heavily into a chair which stood beside him.

Lewis produced from a cupboard food and wine, and placing them before him, induced him to partake of some refreshment, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the light return to his eye and the colour to his cheek. Lewis then filled for himself a glass of wine, replenished that of his companion, and seating himself, hastened to relate to Miles Hardy the strange train of events by means of which he had become acquainted with so large a portion of the young man's history. The feelings with which Miles Hardy listened to the account of his unhappy father's career, and the mingled grief and anger with which he heard how the heritage of his mother's shame had descended to his unfortunate sister, may easily be imagined. Lewis strove with an amount of patient kindness, for which those who knew only the fiery side of his character would scarcely have given him credit, to soothe

the passionate emotions which his tale excited in an auditor so deeply interested in the fortunes of those to whom it related. After long perseverance his efforts were in some degree crowned with success—Miles became more calm, and agreed with Lewis that his first duty was to seek for, and endeavour to reclaim, his sister. His share of the legacy would furnish him with funds sufficient to enable him to live without the necessity of daily labour, and until his right to the money should be established, Lewis insisted on becoming his banker. The next question was not so easily arranged: Lewis informed Miles that in regard to the events of the evening he had arrived at the following determination—viz., to call on Colonel Marinovich, make him acquainted with the plot against his life, beg him to inform his superiors that such a conspiracy was on foot, and explain the manner in which he had become aware of its existence; but as far as Miles was concerned in the affair, he would promise to preserve a total silence, on one condition—namely, that he, Miles, should withdraw from the conspiracy and engage to keep the peace in regard to the commandant of the Arsenal. To this proposition the young man demurred.

“What,” he said, “give up my just revenge!—submit to undeserved chastisement like a beaten hound, and leave it to less tame and slavish spirits to punish the tyrant for his cruelty!—allow them to meet the danger and divide the glory while I stand by inactive! Never!”

“Believe me, Miles,” returned Lewis earnestly, “revenge, even just revenge, partakes of the nature of sin, and brings upon him who obtains it the curse of an upbraiding conscience. But yours is not a just revenge; you have suffered wrong, and the sense of this blinds your judgment. I know by report the character of this Marinovich; I know him to be a just and honourable man, though a stern disciplinarian. Great abuses had existed at the Arsenal, and it was in order to reform them that the command was bestowed on him. In your individual case he has acted unjustly, but in all probability appearances were strongly against you, and he had not sufficient personal acquaintance with you to know that amongst such inveterate liars as are the majority of the lower order of Venetians, your word might be relied on. His only fault is, therefore, that he committed an error in judgment, and would you on this account take a man’s life? Besides, conniving at assassination is a cowardly proceeding, unworthy any Englishman, and especially a brave young fellow like yourself.”

It was evident that Lewis’s reasoning was not without its effect on him whom he addressed, for his brow contracted, his fingers closed and relaxed, his mouth quivered convulsively, and his whole demeanour was that of a person struggling against some powerful temptation. At length he exclaimed abruptly—

“I know not how it is, you sway me like a child. I had resolved not to rest till that man was dead, but I never before saw the matter in the light in which you have now placed it. I believed that his death would be an act of justice, and considered that, in order to obtain justice, we must take the law into our own hands—but I feel the truth of what you say, that assassination is cowardly; I felt it

when Jacopo was dogging your footsteps, and but for the cause that was at stake, could have found in my heart to warn you."

"Then you will agree to my proposal?" inquired Lewis.

"Yes, I will agree to withdraw from the conspiracy, but it is at the risk of my life that I do so; if I am found in Venice after my desertion is known, I am a dead man. Moreover, I will promise you to abstain from secretly attempting Marinovich's life; but if I should ever meet him face to face and hand to hand, I will teach him to remember having flogged an Englishman."

Lewis felt that in his new character of Mentor he ought to combat this openly declared resolution, but he abstained from doing so, partly because he felt it would be useless, and partly because he sympathised so completely in the sentiment, that he could not muster sufficient hypocrisy to reprove it. Accordingly he remained satisfied with the concession he had gained, and furnishing Miles with all the information he possessed in regard to his sister, which was but vague and unsatisfactory (a rumour that she had passed some time in Rome on her first arrival in that country being the only trace he had yet been able to discover of her proceedings), Lewis gave him an introduction to an agent whom he had employed to gain further tidings, and forcing a sum of money upon him more than sufficient to defray his expenses, hastened his departure ere the brilliant rays of an Italian sun had spread the lustre of the coming day throughout the picturesque old streets and palace-crowned squares of Venice.

On the following morning Lewis fulfilled his intention of calling on Colonel Marinovich, who heard his recital in silence, and when he had concluded, thanked him for his information, said he was aware great disaffection existed amongst the men employed at the Arsenal, and that energetic measures must be taken to prevent its spreading further, promised to report the discovery of the secret meeting to the Governor, took down Lewis's address, and politely bowed him out.

Having despatched a note to Charles Leicester telling him he wished to see him, Lewis debated with himself how much of the previous night's adventure he should reveal to him, and at length decided that it would be more prudent to avoid mentioning his encounter with and recognition of Miles Hardy, as although he had refused to reveal to him the name of the seducer of his sister, yet any reference to an affair in which Lord Bellefield had so singularly misconducted himself must necessarily be painful to Leicester. Moreover, although in his dealings with Miles Hardy Lewis had acted justly, according to the best of his judgment, he was by no means clear that the law might take the same view of the matter. Charley came—listened to his friend's account—yawned—wondered why he had such a strange predilection for putting his life in danger, prophesying that he would do it once too often and be sorry for it afterwards—expected there would be a shindy in Venice before long—wished Laura and the brat were safe in England, and that the other people were not coming—voted it all an awful bore—asked Lewis whether he liked foreign tailoring, into the merits and demerits whereof he entered at some length—yawned again, and patting him affectionately on the back,

told him to take better care of himself for the future, and lounged carelessly out of the studio.

A week passed away. The Grant party had arrived; Annie, although she made a great effort to appear in her former spirits, was evidently labouring under some ailment, mental or bodily, or both combined, which was wearing away her youth, and, as it appeared, changing her whole nature. Laura, who watched her closely, observed that she was unusually silent and abstracted, falling into long reveries, from which she would awake with a start, and glancing round with a half-frightened air, would immediately begin talking in an unnaturally excited manner, as if to do away with any suspicion to which her silence might have given rise. Her temper also, which had been remarkable for its sweetness, had now become uncertain, and she occasionally answered even the General with a wayward captiousness which surprised Laura only one degree less than the preternatural meekness with which that gallant officer submitted to her caprices and indulged her every whim; but the fact was, General Grant had sufficient acuteness to perceive that for some cause, utterly beyond the scope of his philosophy to account for, his daughter was not the quiet, gentle, *will-less* creature she had been, and that if he required her to yield to him in great matters he must allow her to rule in small. Moreover, he had lately become seriously alarmed about her health; a London physician whom he had consulted on the subject having plainly told him unless great caution was observed she would go into a decline, and warned him that the seat of the disease appeared to be in the mind, and that anything like harshness or opposition must be avoided. Walter also was much changed during the two years which had elapsed. In appearance he was now a young man, tall, and slightly but gracefully formed, with well-cut, regular features, though a want of intellectual expression marred what might otherwise have been considered a handsome countenance. But considerable as was the alteration in his personal appearance, the change in his mental capacity was equally perceivable, his powers of mind had developed to a greater degree than had been anticipated, but alas! deprived of Lewis's firm yet gentle rule, the improvement in his disposition had by no means kept pace with the extension of his faculties. For some weeks after Lewis had quitted Broadhurst, poor Walter could not be persuaded that he would not come back again, nor was it till the arrival of a tutor, recommended by Lord Bellefield, that he fully realised the fact of his friend having left him never to return. The first effect this conviction produced upon him was a fit of deep dejection; he refused all attempts at consolation, could scarcely be persuaded to take nourishment, and sat hour after hour playing listlessly with the wavy curls of Faust's shaggy coat. At length, in order to rouse him, General Grant desired the dog to be taken away from him; the remedy proved only too effectual. The new tutor, a certain Mr. Spooner, who appeared as if he had been selected because he was in every respect the exact reverse of Lewis, was the person to whom the General entrusted this commission.

Absorbed in his own sad thoughts, Walter allowed him to coax the dog from his side by the attraction of a plate of meat, but when he

laid his hand on the animal to buckle a collar and chain round his neck, he started up, exclaiming—

“What are you going to do with Faust? he is never tied up; let him alone.” Finding that his remonstrance was not attended to, he continued, “Faust! Faust! come here, sir, directly.”

The dog struggled to obey, but Mr. Spooner, having fastened the chain round his neck, endeavoured to force him out of the room, and in doing so stepped accidentally on Faust’s toes, who uttered a shrill yelp of pain. Walter’s eyes flashed.

“You are hurting him,” he cried; “how dare you!” and without waiting for a reply, he darted across the room, seized the astonished Mr. Spooner, who, unfortunately for himself, happened to be a small, slightly-framed man, by the throat, and shook him till his teeth chattered; then suddenly releasing him, he snatched the chain from his grasp, and leading the dog away, muttered in a threatening tone—

“Never you touch Faust again; if you do, I’ll strangle you.”

The results of this scene were twofold: Walter had rebelled and gained his point, and the person whom he had thus conquered had lost all chance of obtaining that degree of ascendancy over him without which his control must become merely nominal. This produced, as might be expected, the worst possible effect upon poor Walter’s disposition. He became positive and wilful in the extreme, and his tutor, partly to save himself trouble, partly to avoid any outbreak of temper, gave way to him on every occasion; unless, indeed, he had any particular personal interest at stake, when he sought to gain his point by cajolery and manœuvring, and being rather an adept in those ingenious arts, was usually successful.

One new and inconvenient caprice of Walter’s was a dislike which he appeared suddenly to have taken to Annie Grant, which displayed itself in various ways: sometimes he would avoid all intercourse with her, even sulkily refusing to answer her when she spoke to him; at others he would seek her out and endeavour to annoy her by saying what he deemed sharp things. Occasionally, however, he would fall into his old habits, and confide in her as his playmate, from whom he was sure of sympathy and assistance; when suddenly, perhaps, even in the midst of some conversation with her, he would appear to recollect his new-born animosity, and his manner would entirely alter. One thing invariably excited his extreme indignation, and this was any attempt on her part to caress or notice Faust. The pain this altered demeanour caused Annie (perhaps in consequence of some theory which she had formed as to its origin) was known but to her own heart, and could be guessed at merely by her unwearying efforts to conciliate poor Walter. Laura, upon whose quick-sightedness nothing was lost, carefully noted these changes, and made her own private comments upon them. In pursuance of her design of befriending Lewis, she made several attempts to penetrate the veil of reserve which hung around Annie Grant; but in vain: with her lightness of heart seemed also to have departed her openness of disposition, and Laura had too much good taste, as well as too much sympathy with her grief, to

endeavour to force her confidence. At length one day, as Laura and Annie were sitting together, Laura working zealously at some article of juvenile finery, destined unconsciously to foster the seeds of incipient dandyism already apparent in that embryo man-about-town "Tarley," and Annie listlessly turning over the pages of a novel, from which her thoughts were far away, the elder lady suddenly broke silence by observing—

"'Tarley' will be two years old to-morrow; how the time slips away, it really seems impossible!"

Annie's only reply was a deep sigh, and Laura continued—

"Why, Annie, you'll be of age in a month—four short weeks more, and you will actually have arrived at years of discretion. How wise you ought to be!"

Finding Annie still remained silent, Laura only waited till she had passed some interesting crisis in her stitching, and then looked up. To her alarm and surprise she beheld the "big tears" silently coursing each other down her friend's pale cheeks: in an instant she was by her side.

"Annie, dearest," she said, "you are weeping; what is it? Have I said or done anything to pain you?"

Annie slightly shook her head in token of dissent, and made an effort to check her tears, which proving ineffectual, eventuated in a bitter sob. Laura could not stand the sight of her grief; throwing her arms round her, she said—

"Annie, you are miserable; I see, I know you are; and your unhappiness is wearing you to death. Why will you not confide in me? Perhaps I might help you. What is it, darling? will you not tell me?"

She paused for a reply, but obtaining none, continued: "This marriage with Lord Bellefield, it is distasteful to you, I am afraid?"

A shudder which passed through poor Annie's frame as Laura mentioned the name of her intended husband proved that on this point her suspicions had not erred. Fancying she now saw her way more clearly—

"Dearest," she resumed, "do not afflict yourself thus; you must not, shall not marry him. I will speak to the General myself. Charles shall write to his brother; you shall not be sacrificed."

"Hush! hush!" interrupted Annie, struggling to recover composure; "you do not know what you say. I *must* marry him; there is no alternative."

"Do not say so, Annie," returned Laura gravely; "marriage is a sacred thing, not lightly to be entered into; and in marriage one requisite alone is indispensable—love! Tastes may differ, faults of temper or disposition may exist; yet if man and wife truly love each other, they will be very happy; but to marry without love is a grievous sin, and it entails its own punishment—wretchedness."

Laura spoke solemnly and with feeling, and her companion, as she listened, trembled and turned pale. When she had concluded, however, Annie merely shook her head, repeating hopelessly—

"It *must* be—it *must* be!"

"And, pray, why must it be?" asked Laura quickly, for she was

becoming slightly provoked at that which she deemed Annie's childish weakness, the only fault, perhaps, with which her clear head, warm heart, and earnest, zealous nature unfitted her to sympathise. "Why, if the thing is wrong in itself, and is to render you miserable, *must* it be? At all events let us make some efforts to prevent it; suffer Charles and me——"

"Dearest Laura," interrupted Annie mournfully, "I assure you nothing can be done; any attempt to break off the match now would be unavailing and only end in making me still more wretched than I am at present."

Annoyed alike at her perseverance in that which Laura could not but consider a culpable want of moral courage, and at the way in which she still withheld her confidence, while at the same time the idea occurred to her, though she was vexed with herself for admitting it, that one so feeble-minded was no fitting bride for the high-souled, brave-hearted Lewis, the spirited little matron was about to utter a somewhat sharp reply, when, glancing at Annie's pale, beautifully-formed features, the expression of deep anguish she read there disarmed her, and merely saying, "We take different views of this matter, Annie dear, and must talk of it again when we are both more composed," she rose and left the apartment.

Annie waited until the sound of the closing door assured her that she was alone, and then murmuring, "She too is angry with me and despises me—nobody loves me. Oh, that I were dead!" she hid her face in the sofa cushion and gave way to a passionate burst of grief.

Now there is one of our *dramatis personæ* for whom we have reason to believe many of our readers entertain a warm regard—a regard in which we confess ourselves fully to participate—of whom we have lately heard but little; of course we refer to that most "meritorious individual," that dog of dogs, dear, honest old Faust. Since Lewis had quitted Broadhurst Faust's character, like those of his betters (if mortals *are* better than dogs), had in a degree altered. The blind, unhesitating obedience he had been accustomed to pay to his master's slightest signal he accorded to no other person; if Walter called him he would come, it is true, but he would do so in the calm, leisurely, dignified manner in which one gentleman would comply with the request of another. Towards the General he conducted himself with a degree of respectful hauteur which seemed to say, "We are not friends; there is no sympathy between us, but as long as I continue to reside in a family of which you are the head, I owe it to myself to render you the amount of courtesy due to your position." For Mr. Spooner, the usurper who had dared to succeed his beloved master, he showed a most unmitigated contempt, totally ignoring all his commands, and resenting any attempt on his part to enforce his authority by the utterance of a low, deep growl, accompanied by a formidable display of sharp white teeth. Towards Annie alone did he evince any great affection, which he showed chiefly by attending her in her walks and taking up his position under the sofa, or close to the chair on which she was sitting—demonstrations of attachment which, as we have already hinted, were for some unexplained reason a source of

considerable annoyance to Walter. During the conversation between Laura and Annie, Faust had been lying unnoticed under the sofa, and now finding his young mistress alone, and for some cause or other unhappy (he knew *that* quite well), it occurred to him that the correct thing would be to come out and comfort her, which he attempted to do by laying his great rough head in her lap, wagging his tail encouragingly, and licking her hand. In her loneliness of heart even the poor dog's sympathy (endeared to her as he was by a thousand cherished recollections) was a relief to Annie, and stooping down she imprinted a kiss on his shaggy head, whispering as she did so, "Good Faust—you have never forsaken me!" At this moment the door opened, and Walter entered hastily. As his eye fell upon Annie and the dog his cheeks flushed, and he exclaimed hastily—

"Annie, I wish you'd let Faust alone; how often have I told you that I won't have him meddled with?"

With a start at this sudden interruption Annie hastily raised herself, and pushing the dog gently from her, said—

"Dear Walter, do not be angry; Faust came and licked my hand, you would not have me unkind to him?"

"Oh! it's Faust's fault, is it?" returned Walter crossly. "Faust, come here! Take him to our room, Mr. Spooner, and keep him there till I come; he shall not stay in the drawing-room if he does what I don't like. Faust, do you hear me, sir?"

"He will never follow me, Sir Walter; it's no use calling him," remonstrated Mr. Spooner.

"He will do as I tell him, and so will you too," returned Walter imperiously, and twisting his handkerchief, he tied it round the dog's neck, led him to the door, gave the end of the leash thus formed to Mr. Spooner, and then fairly turned the pair of them out of the room. Having accomplished this feat, he strolled listlessly to the fireplace, and amused himself by pulling about the ornaments on the chimney-piece for some minutes. At length a new idea seemed to strike him, and turning to his companion, he said—

"Do you know why I was so angry with Faust just now?"

"Because I was petting him, I suppose, as you don't seem to like me to do so," returned Annie.

"Ah! that was not all, though," rejoined Walter; "I wanted him particularly to have been with me when I was out walking to-day, very particularly."

"Yes, and why was that?" inquired Annie, who always encouraged him to talk to her, in the hope of overcoming the dislike which he had taken to her, and which, for many reasons, pained her inexpressibly. Walter remained for a minute or two silent, and then coming close to her, he asked in a low whisper—

"Annie, do you believe in ghosts?"

"My dear Walter, what an odd question," returned Annie in surprise; "why do you ask it?"

Walter glanced carefully round the room, to assure himself that they were alone ere he replied, in the same low, awe-stricken whisper, "Because, if there are such things, I think I've seen one."

"Silly boy," rejoined Annie, anxious to reassure him, for she saw that he was really frightened, "you have fancied it. What was your ghost like, pray?"

"Promise you won't tell anybody."

Annie, half amused, half puzzled by the boy's earnestness, gave the required pledge. As soon as she had done so, Walter, stooping down so as to bring his mouth on a level with her ear, replied—

"It was the ghost of Mr. Arundel!"

Overcome by so unexpected a reply, Annie was a moment or so before she could find words to inquire, "My dear Walter, what could make you imagine such a thing? Perhaps you were asleep, and dreamed it—when was it?"

"No, I was not asleep; and it was not fancy," returned Walter gravely. "I was out walking this morning early with Mr. Spooner, and we lost our way, and after trying for some time to find it, Mr. Spooner hired a boat, and told the boatman to set us down near—near—well, I forget the name, but he meant near here. When we got out, we had to go through some narrow passages between the different streets, and in one of them, which was very dark because of the high houses, we met a figure of a man, very tall, and wrapped in a long black cloak; it drew back to let us pass, and just as I got close to it it turned its head, and I saw the face; it was stern and dark, and wore a black beard, but the beautiful eyes were the same, and when I saw them I knew it was Mr. Arundel, or," he added, sinking his voice, "his ghost!"

As his companion remained silent, he continued, "When I saw who it was, I stopped, and was just going to speak, but at that moment he stared hard at me, gave a violent start, and before I could do anything to prevent it, vanished through a dark archway."

"Oh! you must have mistaken some one for him," returned Annie, struggling for composure—"Mr. Arundel is probably in England, and ghosts are out of the question; besides, if there are such things, which I much doubt, they only appear after people are dead."

Walter considered for a minute, and then met the difficulty by consolatorily suggesting, "Perhaps dear Mr. Arundel *is* dead—perhaps he grew so unhappy that he could not live without ever seeing Faust and me, and—ah! Annie, how could you be so cruel as to send him away?"

"I send him away, Walter! what can have put such a strange notion into your head?" exclaimed Annie, astonished at the accusation.

"Yes you did," returned Walter vehemently; "he went away because he loved you and you would not love him—it was very cruel of you, and I hate you for it whenever I remember how unkind you have been," and overcome by his feelings, the poor boy burst into tears.

A thousand confused thoughts flashed like lightning across Annie's brain. What could he mean?—was she listening to the mere folly of idiocy, or could he indeed have any possible foundation for his assertion? Anxious to soothe him, she laid her hand caressingly upon his, while, replying rather to her own heart than to his last observation, she said—

"No, my poor Walter, he whom you so much regret never loved me."

"Ah, but he did, though," returned Walter positively, drying his tears—"I *know* it." He spoke so decidedly that Annie, despite her reason, could not but feel curious to hear more, and turning away her head to hide her agitation, she asked in a low voice—

"How do you know?"

"If I tell you, you must never tell the General or anybody," returned Walter—"people think I'm a fool, and I know I am not clever, and can't learn like other boys, and sometimes I feel a weight just here," and he pressed his hand to his forehead, "and then all my sense goes out—I wonder where it goes to, Annie—do you think it finds wings and flies up to heaven among the white angels? I think so sometimes, and then I long to be a bird and fly with it." Too much interested to allow him to fall into a new train of thought, Annie recalled his wandering ideas by saying—

"You were talking about Mr. Arundel, Walter dear."

"Oh yes, and about you, I remember," resumed Walter. "I knew, at least I thought, he was very fond of you a long time ago, but I was not quite sure of it till one day when I dressed Faust up like a gentleman, with Mr. Arundel's watch, and you took it off the dog's neck, and then you threw your arms round him and kissed him as you did just now—that was what made me angry when I remembered about the first time—well, while you were hugging Faust, Mr. Arundel came to the door and saw you, though you did not see him, and his eyes danced and sparkled, and his mouth melted into such a sweet smile; he was so glad to see how fond you were of Faust, and then I knew he loved you, for if he had not, he would not have cared about it, you know. Then he went away and left me Faust, and I thought because he had left Faust he was sure to come back, but I know now that he left him to comfort me, and went away himself all alone. Then that stupid Mr. Spooner came; he's a great friend of Lord Bellefield's, and one day they were talking together, and they fancied I did not attend to them, but I did though, for I knew they were talking about Mr. Arundel. Well, Mr. Spooner asked why he went away, and Lord Bellefield replied, 'Why, if the truth must be told, he had the audacity (what does that mean?) to raise his eyes to my cousin Annie.' Mr. Spooner questioned him further, and he informed him that Mr. Arundel had gone boldly to the General, and said he loved you."

"Told my father so!" exclaimed Annie.

"Yes, so he said," resumed Walter; "and the General told him you loved Lord Bellefield instead, and meant to be his wife; and then poor Mr. Arundel said he would go away, and so he did, but of course if you had loved him he would have stayed, and we should all have been so happy together. So you see, Annie, it *was* you that sent him away, and since I've known that I've hated you, and tried to keep Faust from loving you, only he will, and I can't hate you quite always; but I never meant to tell you all this, and you must never tell Lord Bellefield, or he would be ready to kill me."

He paused, then regarding her with a sad, regretful look, he said, "But, Annie, is it really true that you don't love dear Mr. Arundel?"

Poor Annie! affected and excited as she had been by the foregoing

scene, this last speech was too much for her, and throwing her arms about the boy's neck, and hiding her burning cheek against his breast, she whispered, "Dearest Walter, do not hate me! *you have no cause to do so!*"

CHAPTER LVIII.

CONTAINS MUCH PLOTTING AND COUNTERPLOTTING.

It was the evening of the Tuesday in Epsom week, the day before the Derby. Lord Bellefield, though outwardly calm, was inwardly a prey to the most painful mental excitement. His lordship had met with a continued run of ill-fortune latterly—everything he had attempted had turned out badly: if he betted on a race, the horse he backed invariably lost; if he played, cards and dice equally declared against him; he had lavished hundreds in presents to a new opera dancer, and at the moment in which he deemed his suit successful she had eloped with a younger, richer, and handsomer man; his tradesmen began to mistrust him and to dup him unpleasantly; several of his intimates to whom he owed money grew cool and eyed him suspiciously; his extravagance had reached his father's ears, and Lord Ashford had not only ventured to remonstrate with him, but apparently bent on adding insult to injury, had cited the example of his younger brother, Charles Leicester (whom from his heart he despised), and held him up as a pattern for his imitation, while Lord Bellefield was forced to bear this lecturing patiently; for although the estates were entailed, his father had been a careful man, and was possessed of a large personalty which he could leave to whom he pleased. The only piece of good luck to set against all this "monstrous quantity" of vexation was the admirable promise displayed by the Dodona Colt. This exemplary quadruped, now individualised by the name of "Oracle," appeared to have been born with a metaphorical silver spoon in its delicate mouth, for from the moment in which its four black legs (suggestive of its future fleetness, for black-legs are invariably *fast*) put their feet into this uncomfortable world everything had prospered with it. The breeder was astonished at it, the groom who watched over its infancy was delighted with it; Turnbull, the trainer, was so impressed by its merits that he never could speak of it without a volley of the strongest oaths in his vocabulary, by which expletives he was accustomed (transposing a certain poetical dictum) to *strengthen* his praise of anything which was so fortunate as to win his approval; and by the united kind regards of all these worthies this favourite of nature had grown in public opinion until it now held the proud position of first favourite for the Derby. Lord Bellefield was by this time no new hand upon the turf; on the contrary, by dint of having been cheated, and associating with those who had cheated him, for several years, he had acquired, besides a sort of prescriptive diploma to *do* as he had been *done*, a considerable insight into the mysteries of the training stable as well as the betting ring. He was therefore habitually cautious; but in the present

instance all his acquired knowledge and natural acuteness coincided with the opinions of his underlings, to prove to him that in the Dodona Colt he had indeed drawn a rare prize; and that if he could but ensure that which our sanguine country is popularly supposed to expect—viz., that “every man should do his duty,” his horse, and none other, must be winner of the Derby. Accordingly, all the powers of his intellect (which, although not enlarged, was subtle and acute) were now directed to two points—viz., first, to take all precautions to ensure that his horse should be fairly dealt by; and secondly, to make such a book on the event as might retrieve his bankrupt fortunes. This last feat he had succeeded in accomplishing even beyond his utmost wishes; and accustomed as he was to hazard large sums upon the cast of a die, he began to grow alarmed at the magnitude of the stake for which he was about to contend.

Having dined in town at his club, he returned to his luxurious bachelor *ménage* in — Street, and desiring that he might not be disturbed, drew out his betting-book, examined it carefully, went through the calculations again and again, referred to the latest odds—and then closing it with a sigh, muttered, “Yes, they are all safe men, men who will pay to the hour, and if Oracle runs true, this cursed load of debt will be wiped off, and—I shall be rich enough to begin afresh and contract a new one!—if I ay, there’s the rub—if I!” He strode up and down the room. “I am wretchedly nervous to-night,” he exclaimed, ringing the bell. “Bring brandy,” he continued as the servant appeared; then filling a wine-glass, he drank it off as if it had been water—“leave it,” he said; then resuming his walk, added, “It *must* go right—there is not a horse that can come near him; Tartuffe was the only one that had a chance, and Turnbull swears he is safe to lose; he witnessed the private trial himself, and the colt won by a head, carrying 5 lbs. extra weight. That amusement cost me £50 to bribe Austerlitz’s trainer to allow the trial to take place. True, Turnbull may have lied—and yet why should he? he owes everything to me—though that has nothing to do with it—gratitude, if there be such a quality, is simply prospective—men are grateful to those only from whom they expect favours. Well, even thus, Turnbull is bound to me hand and foot; besides, I know he has backed the colt heavily himself: barring accidents, then, against which no foresight can provide, and of which therefore it is useless to think, I stand safe to win. And yet it is a frightful sum to hazard on the uncertainties of a horse-race. If I should lose, I must either blow out my brains like poor Mellerton, or quit the country, marry Annie Grant, and live abroad on her money till my father dies—and he’s as likely to last twenty years longer as I am. I scarcely know which alternative is preferable. What an infernal fool I’ve been to bring myself into this scrape; but when a man has such a run of ill-luck against him as I have been cursed with for the last year, what is he to do?” He paused, stretched himself wearily, and then glancing at a gilt clock on the chimney-piece, muttered, “Twelve o’clock; I must be up early to-morrow and keep a clear head—I’ll smoke a cigar and turn in.” At this moment the house-bell rang sharply, and Lord

Bellefield started like a guilty thing. With an oath at this fresh proof of his nervousness, he filled and drank a second glass of brandy, then stood listening with a degree of eager anxiety which, despite his efforts, he could not restrain. Doors opened and shut, and at length a servant appeared.

"What is it?" exclaimed Lord Bellefield before the man could speak.

"A person wishes particularly to see your lordship," was the reply.

"Say I am engaged, and can see no one; I thought I told you I would not be disturbed," returned his master angrily; "stay," he continued, as a new idea struck him, "what kind of person is it?"

"He desired me to inform your lordship that his name was Turnbull," was the answer.

With an oath at the man's stupidity, Lord Bellefield desired him to admit the visitor instantly.

"Well, Turnbull," he exclaimed eagerly as the trainer entered, "what is it, man?"

Thus adjured, Turnbull, a tall, stout-built fellow, with a clever but disagreeable expression of countenance glanced carefully round the room to assure himself that they were alone, and then approaching Lord Bellefield, began, "Why, you see, my lud, I thought I'd better lose no time, for there ain't too many hours between now and to-morrow's race, so I jumped on to my 'ack, cantered over to the rail, 'ailed a 'ansom's cab, and 'ere I am."

"Nothing amiss, eh? nothing wrong with the colt?" asked Lord Bellefield with an affectation of indifference, though any one who had watched him closely might have seen that he turned very pale.

"No, bless his eyes, he's as right as a trivet, and as playful and impudent as—as a brick," continued Mr. Turnbull, rather at a loss for a sufficiently eulogistic simile; "it was only this morning he took up little Bill the 'elper by the waistband of his indispenionables and shuk him like a tarrier would a rat. It would have done your ludship's 'art good to have seen him; he'll come out to-morrow as fresh as paint, bless his bones."

"Well then, what is it, if Oracle is all right?" returned his employer, greatly relieved.

"Why, unfortunately there's somebody else as has got a 'orse as is all right too, and I'm afraid we ain't quite so sure of the race as we fancied we was," was the dispiriting reply.

"Why, I thought you had satisfied yourself that there was not a horse that could run near him. You tell me he beat Tartuffe carrying 5 lbs. extra weight."

"Ay, so I believed; but the sharpest of us is done sometimes. It's a wicked cross-bred world to live in, and a man need be wide-awaker than—than one o'clock, to be down to all their moves." So saying, the discomfited trainer rubbed his nose as if to brighten his wits, and continued, "The truth is this, my lud—one of my grooms cum to me this morning, and said if I would stand a sovereign between him and one of his mates, he would tell me something as I ought to know. Well, seeing as this race is rather a peculiar one, and as any little mistake might turn out unpleasant——"

"What do you mean, sir?" interrupted Lord Bellefield, drawing himself up with a haughty gesture.

"Nothing, my lud, nothing," returned Turnbull obsequiously, "only as our colt stands first favourite, and as we've made our calculations to win, I thought the Californian farthing would not be thrown away. Accordingly he brought up his mate, as he called him, which was the hidetical boy as first rode the colt, and he confessed that him and the boy that rode Tartuffe had met one day when they was out a exercising, and just for their own amusement they give 'em a three-mile gallop. They run very near together, but Tartuffe beat our colt by above a length; that he'd seen the trial afterwards, and that he knowed from the difference in Tartuffe's running that he was not rode fair, or was overweighted, or something. Well, my lud, this information bothered me, and made me feel suspicious that some move had been tried on which we was not up to, and while I was scheming how to cipher it out, the same boy cum again, and told me that the lad that rode Tartuffe at the second trial was a keeping company along with his sister, and that he thought she might worm something out of him if she could be got to try. Accordingly I sent for the gal, and between bribing, coaxing, and frightening her, persuaded her to undertake the job. She had some trouble with the young feller, but she is a sharp, clever gal, and she never left him till she dragged it out of him."

"Drew what out of him?" interrupted Lord Bellefield, unable to restrain his impatience; "can't you come to the point at once? you'll distract me with your prosing."

"Well, the long and short of it is, as I see your ludship's getting in a hurry (and, indeed, there ain't no time to be lost), the long and short of it is, that they've bin and turned the tables upon us: while we put 5 lbs. extra weight on our horse, they shoved 8 lbs. on theirs."

"Then Tartuffe ran within a head of the colt carrying 3 lbs. extra," exclaimed Lord Bellefield, "and of course without that disadvantage would again have beaten him."

"I think Oracle is a better horse now than he was at the time the trial cum off," was the reply, "but the race ain't the safe thing I thought it. It's rather a ticklish chance to trust to, if your ludship's got at all a heavy book upon the ewent."

As he made this uncomfortable acknowledgment the trainer leered inquiringly with his cunning little eyes at his employer.

Lord Bellefield did not immediately answer; but leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece, remained buried in thought, his pale cheeks and the eager quivering of his under lip, which from time to time he unconsciously bit till the marks of his teeth remained in blood upon it, alone testifying the mental suffering he experienced. Ruin and disgrace were before him. Nor was this all. The Duc d'Austerlitz, a young foreigner who, bitten with Anglo-mania, had purchased a racing stud and was the owner of Tartuffe, happened to be the individual before alluded to as Lord Bellefield's successful rival in the venial affections of the fascinating *danseuse*. He hated him,

accordingly, with an intensity which would have secured him the approbation of the good-hater-loving Dr. Johnson. If anything, therefore, were wanting to render the intelligence he had just received doubly irritating to him, this fact supplied the deficiency. His lordship, however, possessed one element of greatness—his spirit invariably rose with difficulties, and the greater the emergency the more cool and collected did he become. Having remained silent for some minutes, he observed quietly, "I suppose, Turnbull, you, being a shrewd, clever fellow in your way, scarcely came here merely to tell me this. You are perfectly aware that, relying upon your information and judgment, I have made a heavy book on this race, and can imagine that, however long my purse may be, I shall find it more agreeable to win than to lose. You have, therefore, I am sure, some expedient to propose. In fact, I read in your face that it is so."

The man smiled.

"Your ludship I always knew to have a sharp eye for a good horse or a pretty gal," he said, "but you *must* be wide awake if you can read a man's thoughts in his face. It ain't such an easy matter to say what is best to do; if your ludship made rather too heavy a book on the race, I should recommend a little careful hedging to-morrow morning."

Lord Bellefield shook his head. "Too late to make anything of it," he replied, "that is, of course, I might save myself from any very heavy loss, but I must have money—a—in fact, I stand so fair to win largely by this race, that hedging will be quite a *dernier ressort*. But you have some better scheme than that to propose."

"If your ludship is at a loss how to act, it is not likely that any plan of mine will do the trick," was the reply.

Whether or not Turnbull wished to provoke his employer, certain it is his speech produced that effect, for with an oath Lord Bellefield exclaimed—

"What is it you are aiming at? if it be money you are standing out for, you have only to prevent Tartuffe from starting, and name your own price."

"Why, you see, it might be as well to let him start; men have been transported for interfering with a race 'orse to purwent his starting—but he need not win the Derby for all that," was the enigmatical reply.

Lord Bellefield's lip curled with a sardonic smile; his knowledge of human nature had not then deceived him—Turnbull had some scheme *in petto*, and was only waiting to secure the best market for it.

"I suppose £1000 will satisfy you?" he said; and as the trainer bowed his gratitude, continued, "You are certain your plan cannot fail? What is it you propose?"

"Why, you see, my lud, 'orses is like 'uman creeturs in many respects," replied Turnbull sententiously; "there's some things as agrees with their stummicks, and some as disagrees with 'em; the things that agrees with the hanimals makes 'em run faster, the things that disagrees makes them run slower, or if you give it 'em too strong they comes to a standstill all together. Now, if so be as Tartuffe was to have a taste of a certain drug as I knows on—that ain't very different

from hopium—give to him afore he goes to sleep to-night, he'll come to the starting post all right and run very respectable, but if he beats our 'orse I'll engage to eat him, saddle and all. I can't speak fairer than that, I expect."

"And who have you fixed upon to execute this piece of delectable rascality?" inquired Lord Bellefield, unable to repress a sneer at the meanness of the villainy by which, however, he was only too glad to profit.

"It was not a very easy matter to pitch upon the right man," rejoined the trainer, "but luckily I happened to remember a party that seemed as if he'd been born a purpose for the job, and who has been so thoroughly cleaned out lately that he was not likely to be particular about trifles. I saw him before I left home, showed him which way his interest lay, put him up to my ideas on the subject, and I hope when I see your ludship to-morrow morning I shall have some good news to tell you."

"I'll be with you early, before people are about," returned Lord Bellefield; "it is important that I should know the result of this scheme as soon as possible. The greatest caution must be observed lest the matter should transpire, and if anything comes out, you of course must take it upon yourself. The man should go abroad for a time. And now I must try and get a couple of hours' sleep, or my head will not be fit for to-morrow's work. I breakfast at Epsom with a set of men, but I'll be with you first. You've acted with your usual zeal and cleverness, Turnbull, and I'll take care that you shall have no reason to repent your honesty to your employer; only let us win to-morrow's race and your fortune is made. Good-night."

As he spoke he rang the bell, and with many servile acknowledgments of his master's promised liberality the trainer departed.

While this interview was taking place a far different scene had been enacting in the premises occupied by the racing stud of the Duc d'Austerlitz. As the clock over the stables chimed the hour after midnight a light ladder was placed against the wall of one of the outer buildings, and a slightly-framed, agile man ran up it, and drawing it cautiously after him laid it in a place of security, where it would remain unnoticed till his return. He then crept with noiseless, cat-like steps over roofs and along parapets, finding among rain-gutters and coping-stones a dangerous and uncertain footing, until he reached a building nearly in the centre of the yard; here he paused, and drawing from his pocket a short iron instrument, shaped like a chisel at one end, he cautiously chipped away the mortar round one of the tiles which protected an angle of the roof, and by removing the tile, exposed the ends of a row of slating. Quietly raising one of the slates, he, by means of the instrument above alluded to, which is known to the initiated by the euphonious title of a "jemmy," snapped the nails which retained it in its place and removed it. Having acted in a similar manner by two others, he produced a small cabinetmaker's saw, and cutting through the battens, opened a space sufficiently wide to admit the passage of a man's body. Replacing his tools, he crept through the aperture thus effected, and letting himself down by his

hands into the loft beneath, dropped noiselessly on to some trusses of hay placed there for future consumption. Part of his task was now accomplished; for he was in the loft over the loose-box in which Tartuffe was reposing his graceful limbs before the coming struggle; but the most difficult and hazardous portion of his enterprise remained yet to be accomplished. Crawling on his hands and knees, he reached one of the openings by which the hay was let down into the racks beneath, and cautiously peeping over, gazed into the interior of the stable itself, and noted the precautions taken to secure the safety of the racehorse and the difficulties which lay before him. The box in which the animal was placed was secured by a strong padlock, the key of which rested at that moment under the pillow of Slangsby, the Duc d'Austerlitz's trainer, while in the next box, half-lying, half-sitting on a truss of straw, dozed "Yorkshire Joe," a broad-shouldered, bow-legged lad some eighteen years of age, who had been a kind of equestrian valet to Tartuffe during the whole "educational course" of that promising quadruped.

These particulars the intelligent eye of the tenant of the hay-loft took in at a glance, while his quick wit decided as rapidly the exact degree in which they were calculated to tell for or against the object he sought to accomplish. The padlock was in his favour; for as he did not intend to enter the horse-box by the door, it would serve to keep Joe out without interfering with his design; but the presence of the stable-boy presented an insuperable obstacle to his further proceedings. This difficulty had, however, been foreseen and provided against. Stealing on tiptoe across the loft, he selected a long, stout straw, and thrusting it through the key-hole of the door by which the fodder was taken in, he suffered it to drop on the outside. Scarcely had he done so, when a low cough announced the presence of some confederate, and satisfied that everything was in a right train, he noiselessly returned to his post of observation. In another moment his quick ear caught the sound of a modest tap at the stable-door. Honest Joe's senses not being equally on the alert, the knock had to be repeated more than once ere he became aware of it. As soon as he grew convinced that the sound was not the creation of his sleeping fancy, he rubbed his eyes, stretched himself, and drowsily inquired, "Who's there?"

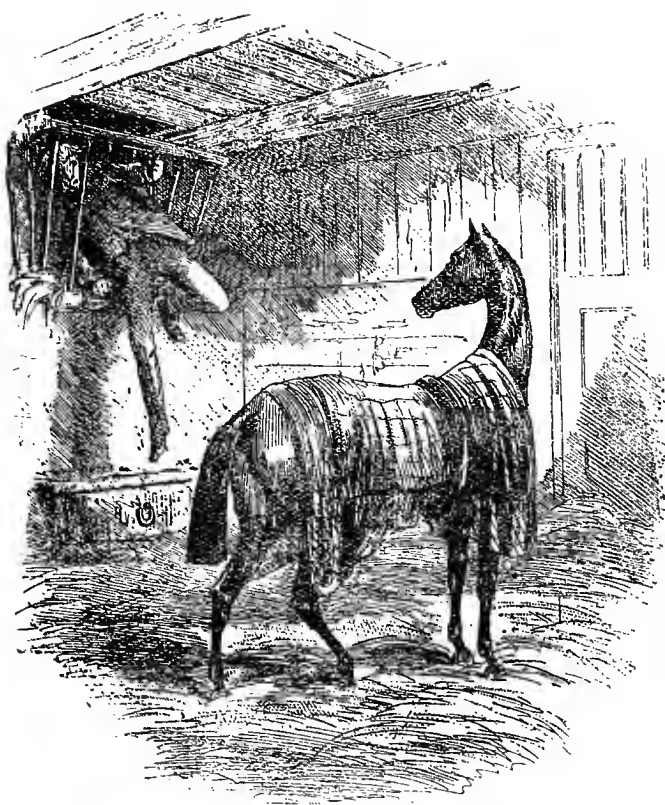
"It is I—Mary; and I want particularly to speak to you," replied a woman's voice.

"Thy want must wait till morning, lass; for I'm not a-going to leave this place to-night for nothink nor nobody; so gang thee whoam agin," was the uncourteous reply.

"No, but Joe, dear Joe, you must hear me to-night; it is something very important indeed. You *must* hear me," pleaded the temptress.

"I woan't, I tell thee; gang whoam!" returned Joe gruffly.

"Well, if I'd thought you'd have been so unkind, I would not have stayed out of my warm bed, trapesing through Hepsom streets at this time o'night, which ain't fit for a respectable young woman to be out in, and coming all this way to put you up to something as may lose you your place, and worse, if you ain't told of it. I didn't expect sich



'TIS EASY TO PUT YOUR FOOT IN IT.

unkindness—and from you, too; that I didn't;" and here a sound akin to a sob, apparently indicating that the speaker was weeping, found its way to Joe's ears, and going thence straight to his honest, unsuspecting heart, overcame his prudence and conquered his resolution. Rising from his seat, he approached the door and listened; the sobs still continued.

"Mary, lass, what ails thee?" he said; "I didn't mean to anger thee, wench! but thee knoas I dare na leave t'horse; besoids t'stable-dour be locked, and maister's got t'key."

"And can't you come to the window in the further stable, where we've talked many a time before?" suggested the siren. "It's something about the horse I want to tell you, a dodge they're going to try to prevent his winning to-morrow. You don't think I'd have come out at this time o'night for nothing, do you, stupey?" This intelligence chased away Joe's last lingering scruple, and muttering—

"About t'horse!—why did na thee say so afore?" he lit a hand-lantern at the lamp which hung from the ceiling, and assuring himself by a glance that his charge was in safety, quitted the stable by a side-door.

In the meantime, the occupant of the loft had not been idle. As soon as Joe became engrossed by the foregoing conversation, the sound of a fine saw at work might have been perceived by a more delicate organisation than that of the sturdy groom; and at the moment in which he left the stable two of the bars of the rack were silently removed, and through the opening thus effected a man cautiously lowered himself, and resting his feet for an instant on the manger, dropped lightly into the box occupied by Tartuffe. This feat was accomplished so quietly, that the horse, which happened not to be lying down, but was standing, trying, through its muzzle, to nibble the straw of its bed, was scarcely startled, merely raising its head and staring at its unexpected visitant. This individual now produced from his mysterious pocket a handful of oats, and holding them out, allowed Tartuffe to smell and nibble at them; while the animal was thus engaged, he removed the muzzle, worn for the purpose of preventing it from eating its litter, or otherwise gaining access to any food of which the trainer might disapprove. His next proceeding was to draw out that ingenious instrument of torture yclept a twitch, which, for the benefit of those of our lady readers who do not happen to be gifted with "a stable mind," or to have encouraged sporting tendencies, we may describe as a short, thick stick or handle, about two feet long, terminated by a loop of stout whipcord or leather, into which the upper-lip, or occasionally the ear of the horse, is inserted; then, by twisting the stick, the loop can be tightened so as to produce any amount of agony the inflicter may desire: the philosophy of the matter being, that the animal finding his struggles exactly double his pain, soon has sense enough to choose the lesser of two evils, and therefore stands still while nasty things are being forced down his throat and other liberties taken with him, which, but for the application of the twitch, he would actively resent. In the present instance, while the unfortunate Tartuffe was still chewing the oats by which his

confidence had been betrayed, the twitch was fixed on his nose, tightened, and the nauseating ball which was to impair his strength and fleetness, and secure the victory to the Dodona Colt, and fortune to Lord Bellefield, was already in his mouth ere he was aware that any incivility was intended him. To give a horse a ball, however, it is not only necessary to put it into its mouth but to thrust it back as far as, if possible, the entrance of the gullet, and this operation, even when performed in the most skilful manner, is by no means easy to the operator or agreeable to the patient. In this last particular the victimised Tartuffe appeared to be entirely of our opinion; the blood of his noble ancestors stirred within him, and tossing up his head indignantly, he became practically aware of the full virtues of the twitch; the pain, however, only served to increase his rage, and he attempted to rear; but his struggles were vain; his tormentor pertinaciously clung to him, the ball was thrust further back in the mouth, and in another moment the desired object would have been attained, when suddenly the loop of the twitch, unable to bear the strain upon it, snapped. The first use the racehorse made of his freedom was to shake his head violently, and at the same time opening his mouth, the stupefying ball dropped from it.

We must now return to our friend, Yorkshire Joe, who, suspecting no evil, was engaged in interesting colloquy with the perfidious Mary; this seductive young lady having contrived, with a degree of ingenuity worthy a better cause, to prolong the interview by the following expedients. First, she assailed her admirer with coquettish reproaches for his unkindness and want of gallantry in refusing to speak to her; then she entered into a long account of how and when and where she had discovered the pretended design against Tartuffe, which she affirmed was to be put into execution two hours from that time.

"Eh! What! tie my hands behoid me, shove a gag into my mouth, and then and there lame t'horse afore my very eyes—dost thee say, lass? I'd only like to see the man, or men either, that could do it!" exclaimed Joe, doubling his fist indignantly; "and thee heard this in the tap-room of the Chequers, dost thee say?—What was that noise?"

"Nothing. I dropped one of my pattens, that was all," returned the girl, stooping as if to pick it up, though she was not sorry for an excuse to hide her agitation, for her quick ear had detected the sound of a horse's hoofs trampling on straw, and she knew that her accomplice was at work. "Why, you are quite startlish to-night, Joe!" she resumed, looking up at him with a forced smile; "did you think it was a ghost?—but it's no wonder you're nervous; it's hard lines for you, poor fellow, sitting up at nights like this——"

"There it is agen!" interrupted Joe; "by —— it's in t'horse-box," he continued, listening attentively. "Them —— thieves can't be come a'ready, sure!" And heedless of Mary's assurances that it was nothing, and her entreaties to remain only one moment longer, the groom, now thoroughly excited, leaped down from the window and rushed back into the stable.

With the speed of thought the girl sprang to the door at which she

had previously tapped, and stooping her head to the key-hole, listened eagerly. The first thing that met her ear was a volley of abuse from Joe, accompanied by heavy blows struck against wood or iron; then a noise as of a door being burst open; next, broken curses, dull, muffled strokes, ejaculations of rage or pain, the sound of trampling feet, a crushing, heavy fall, and then total silence!

What had happened? She placed her eye to the key-hole, but could see nothing. She listened—but the throbbing of her own heart was the only thing she could hear: for the first time the fearful idea occurred to her, that by her treacherous dealing she might have occasioned her lover's death; and regardless of consequences, she was about to start up and summon assistance, when a man's hand was laid on her shoulder, and a gruff voice exclaimed—

"So this is the way my grooms are tampered with! I was sure I heard talking going on. Hold up your head, you jade, and let us see what you're like; nay, it's no use to struggle, I've got you fast enough, and see who it is I will."

So saying, Mr. Slangsby the trainer drew the girl towards him, and forcibly raising her head, threw the light of a bull's-eye lantern full on her features. "Ha! little Mary Williams," he continued, "and what brings you here at this time of night, you artful hussy?"

"Oh! Mr. Slangsby, pray open the door, sir; I—I'm afraid they've been and murdered poor Joe," was the reply, and overcome by fear and remorse, the girl burst into tears—real ones, this time.

"They, and who are they, pray? There's some rascality going on here, I expect; it's lucky I got up." As he spoke, Slangsby drew a key from his pocket, opened the door, and still retaining his grasp on the girl's wrist, entered. The first object which met their sight was Joe, by no means murdered, although he bore evidences of a severe struggle in a black eye and bleeding knuckles.

"Thorse is all right, meister, but I wor only jest in time, though!" was his opening speech.

"In time for what?" inquired Slangsby eagerly.

"In time to stop yon villain from pizonin the blessed hanimal," returned Joe, pointing to something which at first sight appeared to be a large bundle, but which proved on examination to be a human being most ingeniously tied hand and foot with haybands.

"Who the deuce are you, fellow?" asked the trainer, addressing the individual thus uncomfortably situated.

"It ain't o' no use talking to he, for a can't answer with a wisp o' straw stuffed atween his jaws," observed Joe sententiously.

"Take it out then, and untie his legs so that he can stand up and answer my questions."

"Better shut the dour fust then, meister, for he's a proper slippery customer, I can tell you," returned the groom. "He promised to gag me and tie my hands behind me, I do hear said, but he's found two can play at that trick. Get up, ye warmint," he continued, applying a by no means gentle kick to the ribs of his prostrate captive, "and show your ugly mug."

The person thus uncomplimentarily apostrophised rose slowly and

stood sullenly awaiting the trainer's scrutiny. The latter, holding the lantern so that its light fell upon the stranger's features, recognised him immediately.

"Mr. Beverley," he said in a tone more of contemptuous pity than of anger, "is it you, sir? I knew times had been getting very bad with you, but I did not think you had come to this."

The man's lip quivered—the reproach touched him more than the most virulent abuse could have done. His had been, we fear, no very unusual fate; at all events he had only fallen one step lower than many who had followed the same career as he had done. Well-born, rich, and with above average abilities, a taste for gambling and low company had caused him to sink lower and lower in the scale of society, till the depth of misery and degradation to which he had been reduced, and the extent of the bribe offered by Turnbull, had overcome his last feeling of honour or honesty, and he had consented to become the agent of another's villainy. Slangsby eyed him sternly for a moment, and then said—

"You know what you have laid yourself open to, I suppose?" The other nodded in sign of assent.

"I don't wish to be hard upon you, sir," the trainer continued, "so if you will speak out and tell me *all*, we may perhaps come to some better understanding: what say you?"

The other reflected a moment and then replied in a low voice, "I will do as you wish, but not here."

"Joe, you have distinguished yourself," observed his master, putting his hand into his pocket, "here is a ten-pound note for you. Do not mention this night's work to anybody, and I will take care your wages are raised. Now, sir," he continued to Joe's late adversary, "I am ready to talk to you—by the way, about the girl; she was your accomplice, of course?"

The stranger nodded.

"Your sweetheart has deceived you, Joe," added Slangsby; "give her a good lecturing, and then lock her up for the night in the saddle-room; she must not be at liberty till the race is over, upon any account."

Honest Joe scratched his head in deep perplexity—then a light dawned upon him, and he perceived how Mary had beguiled him. Seizing her roughly by the wrist, he dragged her off, exclaiming, "Come along, thee cheating jade, could'st thee foind nothing better to do than to go and deceive a poor lad that loved thee, and try to get him into trouble? If thee was but a man, I'd wollup thee till thou could'st not stand, and as it be, a little starving will do thee good, so cum along."

At the same moment Slangsby and his companion quitted the stable, and adjourning to the trainer's private apartments, held there a long and solemn conference; the result may be gathered from the following speeches—

"And you feel sure Lord Bellefield is aware of the whole thing?" questioned Slangsby.

"I've not a doubt of it," was the reply. "Turnbull was too ready

with the blunt to be acting on his own account, he has not got the money to do it. I am to have £500 clear for this job, and my expenses paid to any part of the continent I may select."

"And we may trust you?"

"Why, of course you may, man; by doing as you propose I escape transportation, receive £500 to start afresh with, and get sent over to Paris out of harm's way free of expense."

"And your conscience?" inquired Slangsby with a sarcastic smile.

"Curse conscience," was the angry reply; "I began life with as much honourable feeling as any man, but the villainy of the world has crushed it out of me. Life is a struggle, and each one must take care of himself; while I had money I spent it liberally, and met my engagements honestly. Now I have none, I get it as I can. I undertook to drug your horse because I was deeply in debt, all but starving, and Bellefield's bribe offered me a chance. I failed through an accident, and fell into your power; your proposal regains me the position, and I embrace it now as I did before. True, I deceive him: fancying your horse is poisoned he will double his bets, which are very heavy already, and be ruined, as better men have been before him, but this only serves him right for his rascality, and—puts £500 into my pocket. I have to thank you for your civility, Mr. Slangsby, and to wish you good morning." He turned to go, then pausing, said—

"You have used me well in this affair, and to show you I am not all bad, I will give you a hint. Do not rely too much on the result of that trial: Bellefield's colt was only recovering from the strangles then, and has since improved in speed and bottom; still Tartuffe can beat him *if he is made the most of*; everything therefore depends upon your jockey; if he is careless or over-confident, Oracle may have it yet—*verbum sat*." So saying, he placed his hat on one side of his head, coolly ran his fingers through his hair, and departed.

CHAPTER LIX.

DESCRIBES THAT INDESCRIBABLE SCENE, "THE DERBY DAY."

"FAIR laughed the morn, and soft the zephyr played," as Lord Bellefield, having held an interview with his trainer, which had served in great measure to set his mind at ease, cantered back to the inn at Epsom, shaved the small portion of his chin which he saw fit to denude of hair, made an elaborate toilet in the best style of sporting dandyism, and then lounged down to breakfast, of which meal he had invited some dozen of his intimates to partake. Amongst the last comers was a tall, dark-whiskered man, who might be two or three years Lord Bellefield's senior. Pointing to a seat on his right hand, his entertainer began—

"Well, Philips, how is it with you this morning? You've been wandering about as usual, picking up the latest news, I suppose? what say the prophets?"

"There is nothing original hazarded, my lord," was the reply,

"Oracle is as much in favour as ever; Phosphorus is looking up slightly, and the Tartuffe party are backing their horse to a high figure; they seem to be in earnest, and mean to win if they can."

"Ay, if they can," returned Lord Bellefield, smiling ironically; "I confess, for my own part, I do not see that animal's good points."

"He has wonderful power in the loins, and his deep girth gives plenty of room for the lungs to play; no fear of 'bellows to mend' in that quarter," was the reply.

"Very excellent points in a hunter or steeplechase horse, but misplaced in a racer, and by no means calculated to make up for a want of fleetness. Tartuffe, in my opinion, has not the true racehorse stride, as Austerlitz will find to his cost, if he really is laying money on him."

"He may not cover so much ground in his stride as Oracle, but he is unusually quick in his gallop, and takes two strokes while another horse is taking one. Still black and yellow (Lord Bellefield's colours) will give him the go-by, and that is all *we* have to look to," was the reply.

In converse such as this, diversified by the interchange of bets of more or less magnitude, the breakfast (if a meal consisting of every delicacy that could please the palate or pamper the appetite, including meats, fish, etc., etc., can be legitimately so called) passed off. When liqueurs had been handed round, Lord Bellefield's drag was announced, and the company dispersed, first to admire and criticise the turn-out, and then to dispose of themselves on and about it. The equipage was in perfect taste, and although not so showy as many others on which less care had been bestowed, or money expended, yet the drag, with its panels of the darkest possible cinnamon brown, picked out with a lighter shade of the same colour; the four blood bays, faultless in symmetry; the two outriders on horses so exactly matching those in harness, that any one unaccustomed to such matters might have been puzzled to conjecture how the grooms could distinguish one from another; the harness perfectly free from ornament of any kind, save black and yellow rosettes in the horses' heads; the two grooms in dark, well-fitting, pepper-and-salt liveries, and irreproachable top-boots and leathers; the coronet on the doors, the cockades in the hats; every trifle down to the gold-mounted whip-handle, excellent of its kind, and in harmonious keeping with the whole, presented to the eye of a connoisseur a *tout ensemble* calculated to excite his highest admiration.

Seating himself firmly on his box, and controlling his fiery horses with an easy confidence which proved him a skilful whip, Lord Bellefield drove to the Downs, apparently impassable obstacles seeming to melt before him as if by magic (one of the surest tests of a good coachman), and arrived on the course exactly at the "correct" moment. As he drew up to take his place by the ropes, a showy britska, drawn by four splendid greys, the postilions' bright green jackets and velvet caps blazing with gold, dashed in before him. The carriage contained two persons—a singularly handsome young man with a foreign cast of features, and a girl with black, flashing eyes and a brilliant complexion, dressed not only in, but considerably beyond the

height of the fashion. These were the Duc d'Austerlitz and Mademoiselle Angélique, the fascinating *danseuse*.

As Lord Bellefield, with curling lip, passed them to take up his station farther on, the Frenchman, catching his eye, nodded carelessly, and turning to his companion said a few words in a low tone, and they both laughed. Had Lord Bellefield been living at a period when the state of society allowed the hand to act out the feelings of the heart, he would at that moment have sprung upon the Duc d'Austerlitz, and seizing him by the throat, have held on remorselessly till life became extinct. As it was, he merely returned the nod by a bow, smiled, kissed the tips of his gloves to Angélique, and drove on; so that, after all, civilisation has its advantages.

Having chosen his station, the bays were unharnessed and led away, and a mounted groom approached, leading his master's hack.

"I am going down to the ring, and then to the Warren, to see them saddle," began Lord Bellefield, "so I must leave you to take care of yourselves; but any one disposed for luncheon will find something to that effect going on here after the race. If I am not back, Robson will take good care of you." So saying, he gave an order to one of the servants, who remained with the drag, then, mounting his horse, cantered away.

"He carries it off boldly enough, but they say if he loses the race he is a ruined man," observed one of the *friends* he had left behind him.

"Oh, Lord Ashford will clear him," remarked another; "his grandfather was one of the leading counsel of the day, and the old boy feathered his nest well before he gave up his wig and gown. He was one of the old school of lawyers, and worked in the days when a barrister's professional income was a great fact, whereas now it is a great fiction."

"Come, Briefless, no grumbling; back Oracle for a cool £500, and then you may cut chambers till the season's over. But you are wrong about Bellefield. Lord Ashford has paid his debts three times, and has taken an oath on the family Bible never to do so again; but I don't believe Bellefield's anything like hard-up. You know he won £30,000 of poor Mellerton before he blew his brains out. Here's Philips can tell us all about it; eh, what do you say, man?"

"Nothing," was the cautious reply; "and I would not recommend you to let Bellefield find out exactly all you've been mentioning, my dear Chatterby; I've known him shoot a man for less." So saying, Mr. Philips joined in the laugh he had raised against the voluble Chatterby, and then swinging himself down from the box, left them in order to take his place in the betting ring.

We must now change the venue to the Warren, a small but picturesque spot of ground encircled by a wall, within which enclosure the horses for the Derby and Oaks are saddled and mounted. Here jockeys and gentlemen, lords, blacklegs, trainers, and pickpockets, mix and jostle with one another indiscriminately. Assuredly Epsom, on the Derby day, in exclusive, aristocratic England, is the only true Utopia wherein those chimeras of French folly, Liberty, Fraternity,

and Equality, exist and prosper. Let the reader imagine from twenty to five-and-twenty blood-horses, each led by its attendant groom and followed by an anxious trainer, while the jockey who is to ride it, and on whose skill and courage thousands of pounds are depending, carefully inspects the buckling of girths, regulates the length of stirrup-leathers, and as far as human foresight will permit, provides against any accident which may embarrass him in the coming struggle. Then the horse-clothing is removed, and the shining coat and carefully-plaited mane of the racehorse are revealed to the eyes of the admiring spectators; an attendant satellite at the same moment assists the jockey to divest himself of his greatcoat, and he emerges from his chrysalis state in all the butterfly splendour of racing dandyism. Then the trainer, or the satellite before alluded to, "gives him a leg up," and with this slight assistance he vaults lightly into the saddle and becomes as it were incorporate with the animal he bestrides. Quietly gathering up the reins, he presses his cap firmly on his head, slants the point of his whip towards the right flank, exchanges a few last words with the trainer, and then walks his horse up and down till his competitors are all equally prepared. On this occasion the cynosure of every eye was the first favourite, Oracle, and when his clothing was removed, and one of the cleverest jockeys of the day seated gracefully on his back, he certainly did look, to quote the enthusiastic language of his trainer, "a reg'lur pictur," the perfection of a racehorse. Turnbull's last words to the jockey were—

"Save him as much as you safely can till the distance, and if the pace has been anything like reasonable, it will be your own fault if the race is not your own."

A slight contraction of the eyelid proved that the advice was understood and appreciated, and man and horse passed on.

"How is it Tartuffe does not show?" inquired Lord Bellefield of Turnbull in a whisper. "The dose can't have been given too strong, eh?"

"No fear of that, my lud," was the reply; "but they've probably discovered ere this that there is a screw loose somewhere, and they will keep him out of sight as long as they can, lest other people should become as wise as they are themselves."

As he spoke the object of his remarks appeared; his rider was already mounted, and the horse-clothing removed. Tartuffe was a complete contrast to his rival in appearance. The Dodona Colt was a bright bay, with black mane, tail, and legs; his head was small, almost to a fault, and shaped like that of a deer, his neck longer and more arched than is usually the case in thorough-bred horses; while his graceful, slender limbs seemed to embody the very ideal of swiftness. Tartuffe was altogether a smaller and more compact animal, his colour a rich, dark chestnut, his head larger in proportion, and so placed on as to give him the appearance of being slightly ewe-necked, his forelegs were shorter, and the arm more muscular than those of his graceful rival; but the sloping shoulder, the depth of the girth, the breadth and unusual muscular development of the loins and haunches, together with a quick, springy step and a general compactness of form,

afforded to the practised eye evidence of his possessing very uncommon powers both of speed and endurance.

"He looks fresh and lively enough," remarked Lord Bellefield, after observing the horse narrowly. "What do you think about it?"

"It's all right, my lud," was Turnbull's confident answer; "things speaks for themselves, the 'orse ain't allowed to show till the last minute, and then he comes out with his jockey ready mounted. Now the logic of that dodge lies in a nutshell: finding the hanimal sleepy and out of sorts, they keeps him snug till they're forced to purduce him, and then shows him with the jockey on him, when a touch with the spur and a pull or two at his mouth with a sharp bit makes him look alive again." Approaching his lips almost to his employer's ear, he continued, "Do you see that patch of black grease on his nose? that's where the twitch has cut him. Beverley was obliged to twitch him to give him the ball—so now your ludship may bet away without any fear of Tartuffe," and exchanging a significant glance, this well-matched pair parted.

"Ah! Bellefield, *mon cher!* how lovely your colt looks this morning—I suppose he is to win; for myself I am preparing to be martyrised with a resignation the most touching," and as he spoke Armand Duc d'Austerlitz stroked his silky moustaches and admired his glossy boot with an air of the most innocently graceful self-satisfaction possible.

"You don't really believe that which you say, Monsieur le Duc," replied Lord Bellefield; "I never saw a horse in better racing condition than Tartuffe."

"Ah! *c'est un bon petit cheval*, and I have betted, ah!—bah!—I cannot tell you what sums of money upon him, more than half my estates in Languedoc; positively I shall have to go through what you call the Bench of your Queen, if I lose."

"In that case it is useless for me to inquire whether you are disposed to back Tartuffe against my bay colt," insinuated Lord Bellefield.

"No, not if you have a fancy that way, *mon cher ami*," replied Armand, smiling to show his white teeth; "what shall we say?—an even bet of £3000 shall it be, or £5000?"

"Five is the more comfortable sum of the two," returned Lord Bellefield quickly. "I always like to bet fives or tens; it simplifies one's book amazingly, and I never had a taste for intricate arithmetic."

"*Comme il vous plaira*—say ten, if you like it better." And as he spoke Armand drew out a miniature betting-book and a gold pencil-case blazing with jewels. Lord Bellefield paused for a moment; certain as he believed himself to be of the race, it was a great temptation. But, on the other hand, if he appeared too eager, might not suspicion attach to him in the event of any clue being gained to the poisoning affair? The idea was so alarming to him that prudence overcame avarice.

"I have unfortunately no estates in Languedoc," he said laughingly; "and thousands are not so entirely a matter of indifference to me as to your Grace; so we will book the bet at five."

The wager was accordingly so entered; and with friendly smiles and courteous words upon their lips these two men parted, one hating

the successful rival, the other despising the detected swindler! Alas! for the shams and deceptions of society! pasteboard and tinsel are more real than its hollow-hearted seemings.

"Now you see your game," were Slingsby's last words to the jockey who was to ride Tartuffe. "Make running early in the race, so as to render the pace as severe as possible throughout: your horse will live to the end, and theirs won't; but if he is not well blown before he gets to the distance, it will be a very close thing, and the length of his stride may beat you."

"I'm awake," was the concise reply; but Slingsby was quite satisfied therewith.

Racing may be very cruel, and it may lead to gambling and various other immoralities, major and minor; and being thus proved contrary to the precepts of Christianity, good people may be quite right in using their best efforts to discourage it. Nevertheless, it is a manly and exciting sport; and although the evils to which we have alluded may (and, we fear, do) attend it, we cannot see that the amusement in itself necessitates them. On the contrary, we conceive that they are added to it by the proneness to evil inherent in human nature, rather than as the natural consequence of the sport itself. However this may be, a finer sight than the start for the Derby we cannot easily imagine. Let the reader picture to himself some twenty three-year-old colts, their proud, expanded nostrils snuffing the wind, and their glossy coats glistening in the sunshine, ridden by the crack jockeys of England, and therefore of the world, drawn up in a line, preparatory to starting; let him reflect, in order fully to realise the earnest nature of the scene, that on the fact of which may prove the better horse depend many thousands—perhaps, in the aggregate, more than a million of pounds sterling; that the ruin of hundreds may be involved in the event of the race; that on the chances of that whirlwind course have been expended the anxious thought, the careful calculation of days and weeks and months; that the weighing and reducing these calculations to a theoretic system, by which some certainty may be attained, is the business of many men's lives,—and he will then have some faint idea of the deep, overpowering interest that is excited by witnessing the start for the Derby.

On the occasion which we are describing two false starts occurred. Twice as the word "Go!" was pronounced by the stentorian lungs of the starter did one queer-tempered animal choose pertinaciously to turn its tail where its head should have been; and twice did the same "voice of power" vociferate the command "Come back!" and deep, if not loud, were the anathemas breathed by those jockeys who, having manœuvred themselves into a good position, had contrived to "get away" well. However, "'tis an ill wind which blows good to nobody;" and these delays, annoying as they were to most of the parties concerned, were as much in favour of the supporters of Oracle as they were prejudicial to the interests of those who had backed Tartuffe.

Oracle, amongst other gifts of fortune, chanced to be blessed with a most amiable and placid temper, while Tartuffe, not possessing so

philosophical a turn of mind, was apt to get excited in a crowd, and the first false start completely unsettling him, he availed himself of the second to bolt half-way to Tattenham Corner before his rider could pull him in; and even when that feat was accomplished he showed a decided preference for using his hind-legs only in progression on his return to the starting-post; by his riotous and unmanageable conduct taking a great deal more out of himself than was by any means prudent.

Once more, however, they are all in their places—the word is again given, and they are off—Tartuffe springing away with a bound like that of a lion, and half dislocating his rider's arms by a furious effort to "get his head." As it happened that there were two or three other "queer" tempered horses besides that of the Duc d'Austerlitz which required careful handling, the pace at first was by no means so "good" as Slangsby had wished it to be; nor could the jockey riding Tartuffe venture to improve it, for two reasons: in the first place, his horse was so excited that it required all his skill to prevent his running away with him; in the second, his former attempt to bolt had sufficed to puff him, and he required "saving" to enable him to regain wind. In the meantime Oracle was going sweetly and easily, keeping up with his horses in what appeared scarcely beyond a canter. When past the "Corner," however, Tartuffe had decidedly improved, and his rider, remembering his instructions, began to make play. As the pace increased, the "first flight" became considerably more select, the "tender-hearted" ones gradually dropping in the rear.

Up to this point Phosphorus had been leading, followed by Advance, Whisker, The Lynx, Gossip, and Challenger; but down the next slope Tartuffe came up, passed the other horses, and after running neck to neck with Phosphorus for about a quarter of a mile, took the lead, and kept it by about half a length, Oracle lying well up on the near side. This order they preserved till near the distance, when Lynx and Challenger put on the steam to dispute the leadership with Tartuffe, who appeared by no means disposed to relinquish the post of honour, and the pace grew decidedly severe, in spite of which Oracle continued insensibly to creep up to the others.

At the distance Lynx found it "no go," and fell back beaten; Gossip taking his place, closely waited on by Phosphorus and Oracle; a few strides more, in which Oracle improved his position, and then the final struggle begins, whips and spurs go to work in earnest—the pace is actually terrific—Gossip shuts up, Phosphorus is extinguished, Oracle and Tartuffe run neck and neck, dust flies, handkerchiefs wave, the spectators shout, when, just at the critical moment, the Frenchman's horse shoots forward, as if propelled by some invisible power, the favourite is beaten by rather more than a head, and Tartuffe remains winner of the Derby.

CHAPTER LX.

CONTAINS SOME "NOVEL" REMARKS UPON THE ROMANTIC CEREMONY OF MATRIMONY.

"FRERE, old fellow, have you prepared your wedding garments?" inquired Bracy, meeting his friend accidentally one fine day, about a week after the occurrence of the events described in the last chapter.

"Ay, I hear that your machinations have succeeded," returned Frere gruffly, "and that De Grandeville is about to marry Lady Lombard. I'll tell you what it is, Bracy; it strikes me that in assisting people to make fools of themselves and each other, you are just wasting your time and perverting your talents: depend upon it you may very safely leave folks to perform that operation on their own account, they are not likely to class that amongst their sins of omission."

"Make fools of themselves!" repeated Bracy. "My dear Frere, it's nothing of the sort, that was an '*opus operatum*,' a deed done for our friends by beneficent Nature, long before I had the pleasure of their acquaintance. Moreover, in the present case, I am seeking to diminish, rather than to increase, the standing amount of folly—man and wife are one, you know; *ergo*, by uniting Lady Lombard and the mighty De Grandeville, the ranks of the feeble-minded are one fool *minus*."

"Well, that certainly is an ingenious way of putting it," rejoined Frere, laughing in spite of himself; "and pray how have you contrived to bring about this delectable affair; for I conclude the match *is* your handiwork?"

"Oh! the thing was easy enough to accomplish," replied Bracy. "I invented pretty speeches, which I declared to each that the other had made about them; I exaggerated De Grandeville's position to Lady Lombard, and Lady Lombard's wealth to De Grandeville; in short, I lied perseveringly and judiciously until I fancied I had got the affair thoroughly *en train*. But I soon found out there was a hitch somewhere; it was clearly not on the lady's side, for she was so far gone as to believe in De Grandeville to the extent of estimating him at his own valuation, which I take to be the *ne plus ultra* of credulity; so I set steadily to work to investigate *him*, and if possible find out what was the matter. I tried various schemes, but none of them would act, his reserve was impenetrable; at last, in despair; I gave him a champagne dinner at the Polysnobion, taking care to ply him well with wine, and to walk home with him afterwards. That did the business—he must have been most transcendently drunk and no mistake, for before we reached his lodgings, having confessed to me that his grandfather had been a tallow chandler, he went on to relate that the bar to his union with Lady Lombard was his inability to discover that she possessed any pedigree."

"Well, for that matter," interrupted Frere, "having admitted the tallow chandler, I don't see that he need have been so very particular as to the aristocratic tendencies of Lady Lombard's ancestry."

"De Grandeville did not think so," resumed Bracy; "he argued that

no amount of chandlery could infuse vulgarity into the blood of one of his illustrious house; external circumstances, he declared, were powerless to affect the innate nobility of a De Grandeville: whole years of melting days would fail to drop a spot upon that illustrious name. But for a man, the founder of whose family came over with the Norman William, to marry a woman without a pedigree, one who probably never had so much as a grandfather belonging to her, was impossible: he had a warm regard for Lady Lombard; he considered that his name and influence, supported by her wealth, would place him in one of the proudest positions to which a mortal could aspire; but even for this he could not sacrifice his leading principle, he could not ally himself to any one without a pedigree.

"Seeing that he was in earnest, I forbore to laugh at him; and merely throwing out hints that I had reason to believe he was in error, and that although Lady Lombard's father (an amiable soap-boiler, whose virtues simmered for sixty years in the neighbourhood of Shore-ditch) had been engaged in commerce (he paraphrased the tallow chandler into a Russian merchant), as well as his grandfather, still the arguments which applied to the one case would hold good in the other, and at all events I begged him to take no rash or precipitate step in the matter till I had applied to a friend of mine (of course invented for the occasion) who was a genealogist, and used my best endeavours to clear up the difficulty—for which disinterested offer he, being still more or less inebriated, blessed me reiteratedly and fervently, and so, having seen him safely home, we parted. The next morning I visited Lady Lombard, led her on sweetly and easily to talk of her family, gained some information, and learned where to obtain more, and in less than two days had the satisfaction of proving her fiftieth cousin sixteen times removed to Edward the Third. De Grandeville was introduced to my friend in the Heralds' Office——"

"Whom you declared a minute ago to be invented for the occasion," interrupted Frere.

"For which reason he was the more easily personated by Tom Edgehill of the Fusileers," resumed the unblushing Bracy. "De Grandeville was allowed, as a great favour, to peruse the pedigree, believed in it——"

"Or pretended to do so," suggested Frere.

"To the fullest extent!" continued Bracy, not heeding the interruption, "and the next thing I heard was that the parties were engaged."

"So he is actually going to marry a woman without an idea, properly so called, in her head, and half as old again as he is, for the sake of her money. Well! that's an abyss of degradation I'll never sink to while there is a crossing to be swept in London," was Frere's disgusted comment.

"*Chacun à son gout*—for my own part I should prefer involuntary emigration at the expense and for the good of my country, vulgarly denominated transportation, to being married at all, even were the opposing party (my hypothetical wife, I mean) the most thorough-bred

angel that ever wore a bustle," returned Bracy. "By the way," he continued, "I saw your little friend, Miss Arundel, the other day; she and her mother are staying with the 'Lombardic Character,' I find, but of course you know all this better than I do. Really that girl writes exceedingly good sense for a woman. Now if I were a marrying man, I don't know any quarter in which I'd sooner throw the handkerchief."

"You might pick it up again for your pains, for she wouldn't have you, I'm sure," growled Frere.

"Do you really believe so?" asked Bracy, with an incredulous smile. "Ahem! now I flatter myself the little Arundel has better taste."

"Better sense than to do any such thing, you mean," returned Frere more crossly than before. "Depend upon it, whenever Rose Arundel marries, she will choose a man who can respect and love her, and not a—well, I don't mean to insult you, my good fellow, but truth will out—a self-conceited young puppy, whose head has been turned by foolish people, by whom his cleverness has been overrated and his vanity fostered."

Bracy drew himself up, and for a minute pretended to look very fierce—then bursting into a hearty laugh, he patted his companion on the back affectionately, exclaiming, "Poor old Frere! did I put him in a rage? never mind, old boy, I only wanted to know whether there was any truth in the report that you were engaged to Miss Arundel—and now let me congratulate you. You have no doubt good cause for thinking the young lady would have shown her wisdom by selecting a sensible man such as you are, rather than a *vaurien* like myself, even if I were a marrying man and had placed such a temptation before her."

Frere looked at him for a moment in utter astonishment, then muttered, "A *vaurien*, indeed! I always prophesied that foot-boy of yours would die with a rope round his neck, but I begin to think the complaint which will necessitate such an operation runs in the family, and that servant and master are alike affected by it."

"And what may be the name of this alarming epidemic which you consider likely to terminate so fatally?" asked Bracy.

"A most unmitigated and virulent form of chronic impudence," returned Frere, laughing; then shaking hands most cordially, these two oddly assorted friends parted.

After having left Bracy, Frere bent his steps towards the dwelling of Lady Lombard, with whom Mrs. Arundel and Rose were spending a few days for the avowed purpose of assisting to prepare her wedding paraphernalia, though (as the most skilful dressmaker and the most expensive tradesmen in London were at work in the good cause) their duties were merely nominal. Mrs. Arundel having explained to her hostess the nature of the engagement between Frere and her daughter, that excellent bear was allowed to run tame about the house. Lady Lombard, who was at first impressed by a vague sense of his awful amount of learning, and decidedly alarmed at his snapping and growling, had become reconciled to his presence on perceiving that Rose could tame him by a word or a smile, and committing him to her care and management, troubled herself no further about him.

"Rose, who do you think has gone to Venice?" inquired Frere, after having disburdened his pockets of a little library of heavy books, two cold, uncomfortable fossils, and the very hard handle of a Roman sword, all highly prized and newly acquired treasures, which he had brought that Rose might appreciate them and sympathise with him in his delight at having obtained them.

"To Venice," returned Rose—"oh! who? do tell me."

"Why, lots of people, it seems," replied Frere. "I called upon my uncle, Lord Ashford, this morning, and found him in what is vulgarly termed a regular stew. Bellefield it seems had a horse which everybody fancied was to win the Derby, but what everybody fancied did not come to pass, for the said horse was beaten, consequently his owner has lost no end of money, for which same I for one do not pity him: I have no sympathy with your ruined gamester—and ruined he is, by the way, horse, foot, and artillery, as the military De Grandeville would say. Well, poor uncle Ashford showed me a note he had just received from his dutiful first-born, telling him that he had not a farthing of ready money in the world, except £50 to pay for his journey; that he was quite unable to meet his engagements, and that before the settling day for the Derby he must put the British Channel between him and those to whom he owed sums so large that he neither desired nor expected his father to pay them; that he would feel obliged if his lordship would increase his yearly allowance, and that he wished letters of credit to be forwarded to him at Venice, to which place he proposed immediately to follow General Grant and his daughter, who it appears left England only three weeks ago; that it was his intention to marry the young lady forthwith, and live abroad upon her fortune, until something to his advantage should turn up; and he adds in a postscript, that if his father should attempt to prevent his marriage by informing General Grant of what he is pleased to call his misfortunes, that minute he will blow his brains out. Well, poor uncle, who is a high-minded, honourable man, though he is rather proud and cold in his manner, could not bear the idea of his son marrying Annie Grant without informing the General of his loss of fortune, and at length he resolved to meet the difficulty by selling the H—shire estate, and by that means increasing Lord Bellefield's allowance till it would amount to £3000 a year, in which case General Grant might be informed of the truth without the match being broken off, or Bellefield driven to desperation. Whereupon I observed innocently enough that the success of the scheme would in great measure depend on the tact of the person sent out to manage the negotiation: Lord Ashford agreed in this most cordially, and then saying how grateful he should feel to any one who would assist him in this strait, looked hard at me——"

"And you instantly undertook the commission; I know it as well as if I had been present and had heard all that passed," interposed Rose with a smile, in which, though affection predominated, a slight shade of regret might have been traced.

"Why, you see, Rose, as I am one of the family, there seemed a

kind of obligation upon me to do something to help them; and poor uncle Ashford did look so pitiful; and really if I had not undertaken it, I don't know who could have been found to do so, for Bellefield quarrelled with their family solicitor because he refused to allow him to make ducks and drakes of some of the entailed property three years ago; and I shall not be gone long. Besides, I did not quite forget you, Rosey, for, do you comprehend, I shall be able to see Lewis without his fancying that I have been sent out expressly to look after him, and perhaps I may be able to persuade him to come home and live in England like a reasonable being and a Christian; at all events, I shall find out how he is going on there; and I've another thing to talk to Lewis about—I don't mean to remain for ever without a wife, Miss Rose—you need not turn your head away—that's sheer silliness—you know we *are* to be married some day, we expect matrimony will increase our happiness, and we have sounder grounds for our expectations than most of the fools who yoke themselves together for life; those who do so, for instance, in order to obtain rank or riches—our next-door neighbours to wit," and he pointed with his thumb in the direction of the drawing-room, wherein were seated the mighty De Grandeville and his lady-love. "As, therefore, my reasoning is good, sound reasoning, and matrimony proved to be a desirable thing, why the sooner we get the ceremony over the better; so, as I said before, don't turn away your head like a little goose, seeing that you're nothing of the kind!"

"Poor Lewis," murmured Rose; "he will scarcely rejoice to see you when he learns that the object of your mission is to hasten the marriage of Annie Grant with Lord Bellefield. Oh, Richard," she continued eagerly, clasping her hands, "it will make him hate you—do not go!"

"Well, now, I never thought of that," muttered Frere, thoroughly perplexed. "Why will people go and fall in love with one another that didn't ought to?" He paused, rubbed his hair back from his forehead till it stood on end like the crest of a cockatoo, played with Rose's workbox till he overturned it, and in his abstraction committed so many gaucheries that his companion was on the point of calling him to order when he suddenly returned to his senses, and taking Rose's hand in his, began, "Now listen to me, my child: in the first place, as this matter nearly concerns Lewis, and therefore you, I will do nothing in it of which you do not approve; premising this, I will give you my own ideas on the subject. Touching Lewis's interest in the affair, the question seems to hinge upon this point: does Annie Grant care for him or not? If she does not, it can't signify to him who she marries; and as in that case she is probably attached to her cousin (women don't *always* love wisely, you know), I should feel able to carry out uncle Ashford's wishes with a clear conscience, and trust to Lewis's good sense and kind heart not to incur his displeasure by so doing. If, on the other hand, Annie by any chance loves him, and has been bullied or persuaded into this engagement, I for one will have nothing to do with promoting the match, but, on the contrary, will exert myself to the utmost to prevent it; and now what say you?"

"That by doing as you propose you will act rightly, kindly, and judiciously, and that come what may of it, your interference must be for good," returned Rose, gazing with looks of proud affection upon the simple-hearted, high-principled "*honest* man" (indeed "the noblest work of God") who sat beside her. "But," she continued after a moment's thought, "there is one difficulty which I scarcely see how you will get over—how are you to find out whom Annie Grant really loves?"

"Ask her myself," was the straightforward reply. Rose looked at him to see if he were joking, but his face was earnest and resolved.

"Oh, Richard, you will never be able to do that," she remonstrated; "remember how such a question must distress her."

"Which do you think will distress her most—to be asked abruptly to give her confidence to a person who is anxious to befriend her, or to spend her life with one man, when all the time she loves another?" inquired Frere almost sternly. Then laying his hand on Rose's head and stroking her glossy hair, he continued, "No! no! Rosey, away with all such sophistries; they are the devil's emissaries to render people first miserable, and then reckless and wicked. Marriages, properly so termed, may be made in Heaven, but depend upon it, the spurious articles too often foisted upon the public under that name—alliances in which this world's goods are everything, and the treasures of the next world nothing—come from quite another manufactory."

Then there was a pause, and then Rose inquired when he proposed to set out.

"Why, there is no good in procrastinating," was the reply; "the sooner I start the sooner I shall be back again, so to-morrow the lawyer gets the necessary papers ready; the next day good Lady Goosecap here is to be married, and I mean to attend the ceremony in order to learn how to behave on such an occasion; and the day after that, if nothing unforeseen occurs to prevent me, I'm off!"

"You will write very often—every——" (Frere raised his eyebrows) "well then, every other day, will you not?" urged Rose appealingly.

"What queer things women are!" soliloquised Frere. "Now, if you had been going to the North Pole," he continued, addressing Rose, "it would never have occurred to me to *ask* you to write—I should have taken it for granted that if you had discovered the north-west passage, or done anything else worth mentioning, you would have let one know; and why people write if they have nothing to say I can't think."

"At all events, it is a satisfaction when we are parted from those who are dear to us to be assured that they are well," suggested Rose.

"Oh, nothing ever ails me," replied Frere, quietly appropriating the remark; "there is not a doctor in the country who has ever received one farthing of my money; and as to physic—throw physic to the dogs, always supposing you to have any such abomination to dispose of, and any dogs at hand to throw it to: it's a thing I don't know the taste of, and where ignorance is bliss—well, never mind, I'll write to you all the same, if you have a weakness that way, whenever I can find pens, paper, and a post-office; only if my letters should happen

to be rather prosy, somewhat in the much-ado-about-nothing style, small blame to me, that's all." Thus the expedition was agreed upon, and Rose having told Frere some hundred things which he was to say to and inquire of Lewis, sat down to write a *few* more "notes and queries," winding up with a pathetic appeal to her brother to bring his self-imposed exile to a conclusion.

So the silver-footed hours turned round the treadmill of time, till the dewy morn appeared which was to witness the celebration of the nuptials of Lady Lombard and the mighty Marmaduke De Grandeville. Oh, the ardour and bustle of that devoted household! As for the servants, so late did they sit up and so early did they rise, that going to bed at all became rather a superstitious observance than a beneficial practice. Then everybody had to dress, first themselves and then somebody else; and the amount of white muslin concentrated in that happy family rendered space crisp, and gave a look of pastoral simplicity to the most iniquitously gorgeous arrangements of modern upholstery.

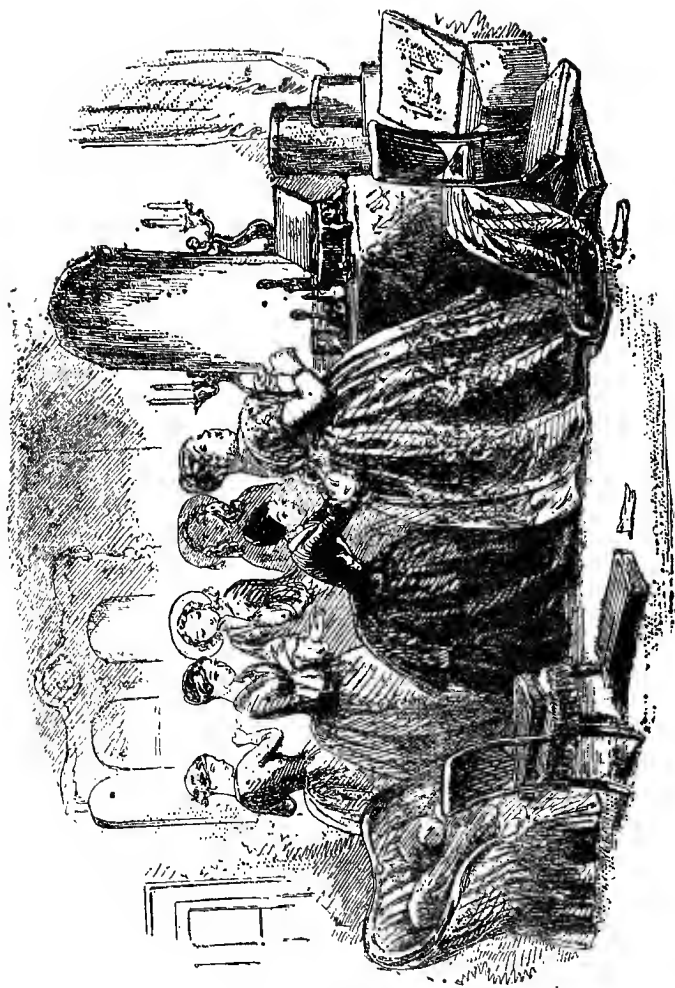
The bride's dress was wonderful—words are powerless to describe it—happy those women who, favoured beyond all other daughters of Eve, were permitted to behold it. One very young lady, rash in her ignorance, ventured to ask how much the lace cost a yard. The French artiste, Mademoiselle Melanie Amandine Celestine Seraphine Belledentelles, piously invoked six authorised female saints, besides the deceased Madame Tournour, at whose flounces she had sat to acquire her art, and whom, on her lamented removal to Père la Chaise, she had privately canonised for her own especial use and behoof, and thus supported did *not* faint. The "mistress of the robes," a black-eyed, brown-cheeked grisette, turned as pale as her complexion permitted her and sank upon a chair, but being unprovided with a smelling-bottle, thought it advisable not to proceed to extremities, and the mother of the culprit hurried forward, and with great presence of mind led her from the room—such mysteries are not for the profane.

Then occurred a tremendous episode—the dress was disposed in graceful folds over the ample person of its fortunate possessor, and fitted seraphically; only the bottom hook and eye, situated in the region round about the waist, would by no means permit themselves to be united, and a lucid interval, *hiatus valde lachrymabilis*, was the fearful consequence. The grisette did her very utmost, but her strength was inadequate to command the success her zeal deserved, and with flushed cheeks and tearful eyes she glanced appealingly to Mademoiselle Melanie Amandine, etc., etc.

That ardent foreigner stepped forward to the rescue, all the noble self-confidence of her nation flashing in her coal-black eyes, and gallantly assumed the post of danger—she was a small woman, but her frame was compact and wiry, and Tydeus-like—

"Her little body held a mighty mind."

Setting to work with spirit, she devoted all her energies to the task before her, and Lady Lombard winced palpably, unconsciously echoing



WOFUL EFFECTS OF A WILFUL WAIST

Hamlet's well-known aspiration—but that good lady's melting moods were unfortunately mental, not bodily, and in this attempt "to take her in" even the French dressmaker was foiled; the "too solid" substance was not compressible beyond a certain point, and with a sigh which had a marvellous resemblance to the word *sacr-r-r-e*, Mademoiselle Melanie Amandine, etc., etc., desisted.

"*Ah! qu'ils sont difficiles ces agraffes!*" she exclaimed, rubbing her little hands with a theatrical gesture. "I have not to myself force in *les poignets*, vot you call oncles."

"Wrists," mildly suggested Mrs. Arundel, who was assisting to attire the bride—"mine are very strong, let me try"—and suiting the action to the word, she, Curtius-like, endeavoured to close the yawning gulf, but in vain.

"*Ah non! c'est impossible*—you shall only hurt your hands too much, *chère Madame Hirondelle*," resumed Mademoiselle—"permit me to ring zie bell, we shall make approach *le maître d'hôtel*, vot you call zie coachman of zie chambaire, who shall have much of force, *et ce sera un fait accompli.*"

"Stop, Madurmoysel," exclaimed Lady Lombard aghast, as the energetic Frenchwoman laid her hand upon the bell-rope—"Stop, if you please, I should not like—that is, it is not exactly the custom to admit the male domestics into one's bedroom."

For a moment the Frenchwoman appeared utterly puzzled as to the reason of the objection, then a light broke in upon her, and she began, "*Ah, je comprends!* it ees not etiquette; *que je suis bête!* how I am stupide! *mais qu'ils sont drôles ces petits scandales Anglais!* *Vraiment c'est comme la comédie. À Paris nous ne remarquons pas ces petits riens; et en Allemagne, zie schneider, vat you call tailor, ils font toutes les robes—mais comment faire donc?*"

"Why really, Madurmoysel, *je nur par*—I mean, I don't think I could bear it, if it was got to," remonstrated Lady Lombard; "don't you think the hook and eye might be moved a little? it's unfortunate I am so stout—*mais je nur*—can't help it."

"*Oh, mille pardons, miladi.* Your ladysheep shall not be too stout; *après la première jeunesse l'embonpoint* is a great beauty; but zie hook and ee, *c'est dommage; cependant, nous verrons*, ve shall see vot will be done." And so saying, Mademoiselle Melanie etc.'s nimble fingers went to work, and a quarter of an inch was graciously accorded; by which means the impossible became possible, and the crisis was safely got over.

As to breakfast (not *the* wedding-breakfast, but the breakfast before the wedding, two very different matters), that was a regular, or rather an irregular scramble: people ate and drank standing, like horses, but in a general way feelings were stronger than appetites, and with the exception of one middle-aged lady, blessed with a powerful intellect and a weak digestion, who having medical authority never to allow herself to feel hungry, breakfasted three times that morning with three different divisions of the party, little justice was done to the viands.

Rose made herself generally useful, helping all the neglected ones, and bringing comforts to the uncomfortable, until she scarcely left

herself time to dress, and yet appearing the most charming little bridesmaid of the lot, although her five companions did not disgrace their uniform of white muslin with pink embellishments (the white symbolising their maiden innocence, and the pink suggesting the cheerfulness with which they would be willing to exchange it for the honourable estate of matrimony).

Then the carriages came to take up, and Mrs. Arundel and the fair Susannah, relict of Col. Brahmin, H.E.I.C.S., had the greatest difficulty in sustaining the weak nerves and fluttered spirits of the bride elect, who, as she herself expressed it, "borne down by two such agitating sets of recollections," might well be overcome. However, by the assistance of a rich male Lombard relation (whose wealth gilded his vulgarity till Mammon worshippers believed this calf a deity) she was safely conveyed to the church, where De Grandeville awaited her, accompanied by a splendid old ancestor, who might by a very slight stretch of imagination have been taken for *the* identical De Grandeville who had come over with the Conqueror, and been carefully preserved (in port wine) ever since. Bracy was there, looking preternaturally solemn, all but his eyes, in which, for the time being, the whole mischief of his nature appeared concentrated, and Frere with him, serving his apprenticeship, as Bracy phrased it.

In solemn procession they approached the altar, where the priest awaited them, and opening his book, read to them an account of the true nature of the ceremony they were about to celebrate—how it was "instituted by God in the time of man's innocence," and was symbolical of high and holy things, and being ordained to assist us in fulfilling the various duties for which we are placed in this world, and on the due performance of which will greatly depend our weal or woe for everlasting, it should not be undertaken lightly or unadvisedly; then De Grandeville, having learned the theory of the matter, proceeded to afford a practical commentary on the text by solemnly promising to love and honour Lady Lombard till death them should part, while she, in return, pledged herself (with less chance of perjury) to serve, obey, and *keep* him during the term of her natural life; then he, Marmaduke, took her, Sarah, from the hands of the wealthy Lombard relation, and declared that he did so "for richer, for poorer," though we much fear, if he had foreseen the smallest probability of the realisation of this latter proviso, the ceremony would have been then and there interrupted, instead of proceeding as it did, sweetly and edifyingly, till it wound up with "any amazement." And everybody being much pleased and thoroughly satisfied, there was, of course, a great deal of crying, though why they cried, unless it was to see so solemn an institution thus wantonly profaned, and to hear people use words of prayer and praise, and worship God with their lips, while in their hearts they were sacrificing all the bitter feelings of their nature before the altar of Mammon, we cannot tell.

Amongst the rest Mrs. Arundel wept most meritoriously, until catching sight of Bracy sobbing aloud into a very large pocket-handkerchief, her weeping became somewhat hysterical, and ended in a sound suspiciously like laughter. Then people crowded into the

vestry, which was about the size of a good four-post bedstead, and names were signed, and fees paid, and small jokes made, and then the whole party took coach and returned to the house, where *the* wedding-breakfast awaited them. The humours of a wedding-breakfast have been described so often and so well, that we shall merely give a very faint outline of the leading idiosyncrasies of the affair in question.

In the first place, people were very hungry, Nature having asserted her rights and promoted Appetite, *vice* Feeling sold (or rather starved) out. Even the lady with the weak digestion (which made up by increased velocity for want of stamina) adding a very substantial fourth to her three previous breakfasts. Then, as mouths grew disengaged, tongues found room to wag, healths were drunk, and the speechifying began. First uprose the De Grandeville ancestor, who was a tall, thin, not to say shadowy old gentleman, with a hooked nose and a weak voice, who whispered to the company that "he rose to"—here his face twitched violently and he paused, in evident distress,—“he rose to”—here a tremendous sneeze accounted for the previous spasm, and the patient, evidently relieved, proceeded, “he rose to”—once again he paused, struggling furiously with the tails of his coat—“he begged to call the attention of the company to—he had”—still the struggles with the coat-tail continued—“he had a toast to propose;” here, amidst breathless attention, he whispered to his nephew in an aside, audible throughout the whole room, “Marmaduke, I’ve left it in my great-coat—the left-hand pocket, you know;” “the toast was this”—“Thank you, Jenkins,” to the butler, who brought the missing handkerchief on a silver waiter, sticky with the overflowings of champagne—“*this* was his toast—he hoped that the company would do it justice—Health and happiness to the bride and bridegroom.”

And the company did it justice; so much so, that if the health and happiness of the newly-married pair depended on the amount of champagne their friends appeared willing to drink at their expense, sickness and sorrow were evils against which they might consider themselves amply secured. Silence being restored, the bridegroom rose to return thanks, his inborn greatness manifesting itself in every look and gesture, and dignified condescension adding a new grace to his sonorous voice and grandiloquent delivery. Having glanced round the table with the air of a monarch (in a fairy extravaganza) about to address his parliament, he cleared his noble throat and began—

“In rising to—ar—return thanks for the honour you have done us, in so cordially assenting to the toast proposed by a man whose presence might confer a favour upon the most aristocratic assembly in the land—a man whom—ar—even at this moment, which I have no hesitation—ar—in—ar”—(hear, hear, and question from Bracy)—“I repeat, no hesitation in—in—no hesitation in—ar—declaring to be at once the proudest and happiest moment of my life—a man who, even in this season of felicity, I yet distinctly—ar—yes, distinctly say, I envy; for he has the honour to represent the elder branch of that ancient and illustrious house of which I am a comparatively insig-

nificant" (a groan of indignant denial from Bracy, which procured him a gracious smile from the speaker), "yes, I—ar—repeat it, a comparatively insignificant, but I hope not an entirely unworthy descendant." Here Bracy, after a slight struggle with Frere, who sought to prevent him, rose, and speaking apparently under feelings of the greatest excitement, said, "He was sorry to interrupt the flow of eloquence which was so much delighting the company, but he was certain every one would agree with him in saying that Mr. de Grandeville's last observation, however creditable it might be to him, as evincing his unparalleled and super-Christian (if he might be allowed the term) humility, could not be allowed to pass unchallenged. He put it to them collectively, as intellectual beings; he put it to them individually, as gallant men and lovely women (immense sensation)—if his noble friend, the illustrious man to whose burning eloquence they had just been listening, were allowed to set himself forth to the world as 'comparatively insignificant' and 'not entirely unworthy,'—he asked them *if* such terms as these were allowed to be applied to such a character as that, *where* was society to seek its true 'monarchs of mind'? where should it look for those heaven-gifted soul-heroes—those giants of thought, those 'Noblers' and 'that NOBLEST,' to quote the glowing words of one of the leading writers of the age, by whom its evils were to be remedied, its abuses reformed, and its whole nature purified and regenerated?—he put it to them to declare whether Mr. de Grandeville must not be entreated to recall his words?"

Deafening applause followed Bracy's harangue, and the amendment was carried *nem. con.* Thus fooled to the top of his bent, De Grandeville resumed his speech, and after making a very absurd display of egotistic nonsense, family pride, and personal pretensions, gave the health of the company generally, and of his ancient ancestor and the vulgar Lombard relation in particular. Then more healths were drunk and more speeches made, and a great amount of stupidity elicited, interspersed with some drollery, when Bracy was called upon to return thanks for the bridesmaids, which he did in an affected falsetto, smiling, blushing, coquetting, and screwing up imaginary ringlets, much after the fashion of the inimitable John Parry, when it pleases him to enact one of the young ladies of England in the nineteenth century. Then the female portion of the company retired to relieve their feelings by a little amateur crying and kissing, champagne and susceptibility being mysteriously united in the tender bosoms of the softer sex; then the miraculous robe was taken off and the bride re-attired for travelling; then the gentlemen came upstairs, all more or less "peculiar" from drinking wine at that unaccustomed hour in the morning, and some little business was transacted; one spirited bridesmaid, who had had a shy young man nibbling for some time, actually harpooning her fish, and landing him skilfully beyond all chance of floundering out of an engagement, by referring him on the spot to mamma. Mrs. Arundel, who by this time had learned to entertain a most lady-like and unchristian hatred against the fair Susannah, maliciously laid herself out to captivate the limp and unstable affections of Mr. Dackerell Dace, and succeeded so well, that

she actually began to deliberate whether opulence and triumph over her rival might not render Dace enduring as a permanency. Then the travelling carriage with Newman's four greys drew up to the door, and the stereotyped adieus were spoken, the stereotyped smiles smiled, and tears shed, and all the necessary nonsense rehearsed with most painstaking diligence, the only original feature in the whole affair being Frere's remark to Bracy as the happy pair drove off—

“You were about right, old fellow, when you compared marrying to hanging. I tell you what it is—sooner than undergo all this parade of folly, absurdity, and bad taste, I'll be spliced at the pier-head at Dover, and set sail for Calais as soon as the ring is on the bride's finger; better be sea-sick than sick at heart with such rubbish as we've been witness to.”

CHAPTER LXI.

“WE MET, 'T WAS IN A CROWD !”

LORD BELLEFIELD safely accomplished his journey to Venice, reaching that city of palaces without let or hindrance. Despite his imperturbable assurance, a close observer might have discovered from external signs that his lordship was ill at ease, and in no particular was it more apparent than in the marked change in his manner towards General Grant and his daughter. The cold nonchalance with which he formerly tolerated the General's stateliness, and the easy, almost impertinent confidence with which he had been accustomed to prosecute his suit to Annie, had given place to an affectation of studiously courteous deference when he addressed the father, and to respectful yet tender devotion in his intercourse with the daughter, which proved that to secure the good opinion of the former, and, if possible, the affections of the latter, had now become a matter of importance to him. With General Grant he was in great measure successful, that gallant officer believing, in his simplicity, that his intended son-in-law had at length finished sowing his wild oats; a species of seed which, being universally acknowledged to contain, besides every small vice extant, the germs of the seven deadly sins, has this remarkable peculiarity, that being once sown, it is popularly supposed to bring forth a plentiful crop of all the domestic virtues. Deluded by this fallacy, the General fondly trusted that the coming event of matrimony had cast its shadow before, and extinguished all the wild-fire which had hitherto flung its baleful glare over his Lordship's comet-like course; or, to drop metaphor and condescend to that much better thing, plain English, the gallant officer taught himself to believe that Lord Bellefield had at length seen the error of his ways and intended to marry and live virtuously ever after. With the lady, however, his lordship did not succeed so easily; and skilful tactician as he not unjustly considered himself, never had he felt more completely bewildered or more thoroughly perplexed how to act. Annie's whole nature appeared to him so completely altered that he could hardly

recognise her as the same person. Instead of the simple, amiable, child-like character which he had despised but fancied would do very well for a wife, he now found a proud, capricious beauty, whose mood seemed to vary between cold indifference and a teasing, sarcastic humour, which he could neither fathom nor control. If he tried to interest or amuse her, she listened with a careless, *distract* manner, which proved his efforts to be completely unavailing; if he attempted the tender or sentimental, she laughed at him, turning all he said into ridicule by two or three words of quiet but bitter irony. She appeared tacitly to acquiesce in their engagement, but any attempt to fix a time for its fulfilment served only to estrange her still more. Does the reader think this change unnatural? may he never witness the alteration which a grief such as Annie's makes, even in the gentlest natures—may he never experience the bitterness of that nascent despair, which can sour the sweetest temper and force cold looks and cutting words from eyes accustomed to beam with tenderness, and lips from which accents of affection alone were wont to flow!

One morning, rather more than a week after Lord Bellefield's arrival, an expedition was proposed to visit one of the architectural lions of the picturesque old city, and as the General seemed inclined to accede to the scheme, and Annie urged no objection, it was agreed that they should go.

"I make one proviso," observed Charles Leicester, "and that is, that you come home in good time. I don't want to frighten you, in fact there is nothing to be frightened about, only I know that there has been for some time past a spirit of disaffection abroad among the workmen at the Arsenal, and if they should attempt to make a demonstration by congregating in the squares and few open spaces in this amphibious city, it might be disagreeable for you."

"But is such an event at all probable?" inquired Laura.

"Why, yes," was the reply; "I had a note this morning from Arundel"—catching a reproachful look from his wife, Charley stopped in momentary embarrassment, then continued—"a—that is, from a friend of mine, telling me such a thing was possible—however, I'll go with you myself, and keep you in proper order."

As Charley in his forgetfulness blundered out the name of Arundel, Laura did not dare to look at Annie; when, however, she ventured a moment afterwards to steal a glance towards her, her features wore the cold, listless look which had now, alas! become habitual to them, and exhibited no sign of emotion by which her friend could decide whether she had remarked the name, or whether it had passed without striking her ear. Almost immediately afterwards she rose, and saying she supposed she had better get ready, quitted the room. Lord Bellefield had not been present at this little scene. With faltering steps Annie sought her own apartment, closed and locked the door; then, instead of preparing to dress, flung herself into an easy-chair, and pressing her hands upon her throbbing temples, tried to collect her thoughts. She had heard the name only too clearly, and combining it with Walter's tale of the ghost, had guessed the truth. *He* was then in Venice, and not only that, but he had evidently established some

communication with the Leicesters, and must therefore be aware of the presence of her father and herself; nay, by what she had gathered from Charles's speech, he must be actually engaged in watching over their safety; and as the idea struck her, a soft, bright light came into her eyes, and a faint blush restored the roses to her cheeks, so that any one who had seen her five minutes before would scarcely have recognised her for the same person. "But with what purpose could he be there? why, if the Leicesters knew it, had they so studiously concealed it from her?—from *her!*" and as she repeated the words the recollection of Walter's speech, "He went away because he loved you, and you did not love him," flashed across her. "What if it were true? what if he had really loved her, and had left them because his feelings were becoming too strong for his control?" and then a thousand remembered circumstances (trifling in themselves, but confirmatory of that which she now almost believed to be the truth) occurred to her. But if this were indeed the case—if, instead of resigning his situation because, as her fears had urged, he had guessed at the nature of her sentiments towards him, he had loved her, and his honourable feelings had driven him into a self-imposed exile—what must he not have suffered! and oh! knowing as much as he did of her feelings towards Lord Bellefield, what must he not have thought of her, when he learned that in less than four-and-twenty hours after his departure she had renewed her engagement to a man he was aware she both disliked and mistrusted! above all, what a false view must it have given him of her feelings towards himself! Oh, how she hoped, how she prayed this blow might have been spared him! Then the present, what did it mean? the future, how would it turn out? On one point she was determined: only let her ascertain beyond a doubt that Lewis loved her, and she would die rather than marry Lord Bellefield. The evils that befall us in this world are not without even their temporal benefit. Two years of hopeless sorrow had given a species of desperate courage to a mind naturally prone to a want of self-dependence. *Anything* was preferable to the anguish she had gone through; and Annie Grant's decision now was very different to the "lady's yea" or nay she would have uttered ere the storm of passion had swept over her maiden spirit.

The effect produced on Annie by the new light which had broken in upon her did not immediately pass away, and although her remarks were chiefly addressed to her cousin Charles, Lord Bellefield was equally surprised and puzzled by the change in her manner. In order to reach the building they were about to visit, they were forced to disembark from their gondola, and after proceeding along a species of cloister, to cross one of the foot-bridges which so constantly in Venice intersect the canals. Under the shade of an arch of this cloister stood the tall figure of a man; as the party approached he drew back further into the shadow, and, himself unseen, observed them attentively as they passed. The excitement of the morning had left its traces in the flushed cheek and sparkling eye of Annie Grant. At the moment she quitted the boat, Charley Leicester had made her laugh by some

quaint remark on the personal appearance of a fat little individual who was one of the gondoliers, but whose figure by no means coincided with the romantic associations his avocation recalled. As, leaning on Lord Bellefield's arm, she passed the arch behind which the stranger was concealed, her companion addressed to her some observation which necessitated a reply. Turning to him with the smile Leicester's observation had provoked still upon her lips, the light fell strongly on her features, revealing them fully to the eager gaze of (for we intend no mystification as to his identity) Lewis Arundel. He looked after them with straining eyeballs, till a corner of the building hid them from his view. Then dark lines spread across his forehead, the proud nostril arched, the stern mouth set, the flashing eye grew cold and stony, and a spirit of evil seemed to take possession of him.

"So," he muttered, "it has come to this; with my own eyes have I beheld her perfidy. It is well that it should be so, the cure will be the more complete, and yet"—he pressed his hand to his throbbing brow—"yet how beautiful she is! She is changed; her face has acquired expression, soul, power, all it wanted to render it perfect, and—to madden me."

He paused, then appearing to have collected strength, continued more calmly, "Yes, I have seen it; she clung to his arm, she smiled on him, she loves and will marry him. It is over; for me there must be no past; I must sweep it from my memory. Happiness I can never know; as far as the affections are concerned, the game of life is played. Well, be it so, my art still is left me, and the dark, the unknown future."

Again he paused. Ere the arrival of the party, the sight of which had so deeply affected him, he had been sketching an antique gable opposite. He resumed his work, and by a few hasty but graphic strokes transferred to his sketch-book the object which had attracted him to the spot. Replacing his drawing materials, he continued, "'Tis strange how the sight of that man affected me: I fancied I had taught myself the evil and folly of nourishing sentiments of hatred against him, and yet the moment I beheld him, all the old feelings rushed back upon me with redoubled vigour. I must avoid his presence, or my wise resolutions will go for nothing." He sighed deeply. "This, then, is all the fruit of two years of mental discipline, to find, at the end of the time, that I love her as deeply and hate him as bitterly as I did at the beginning. Oh, it is humiliating thus to be the slave of passion!"

Communing with himself after this fashion, Lewis quitted the spot and proceeded in the direction of his own lodgings. On reaching the square of St. Mark he found it partially occupied by an excited crowd, composed of the very lowest order of the people, its numbers being constantly swelled by fresh parties pouring in from various parts of the city. It instantly occurred to Lewis that in order to reach the Palazzo Grassini, Leicester and his companions would be forced to cross the square, and consequently obliged to make their way through the crowd; and a feeling which he did not attempt to analyse, but which was, in truth, anxiety for Annie's safety, determined him to remain there till he had seen them return. Accordingly, turning up his coat

collar, and slouching his hat over his eyes in order to conceal his features, he mingled with the crowd. In the meantime the Grant party, ignorant of the difficulties that awaited them, were quietly examining statues and criticising pictures.

"Laura, you look tired, and Annie seems as if she were becoming somewhat 'used-up,'" observed Leicester, glancing from his wife towards his cousin. "No wonder either, for we've been on our feet for more than two hours, and as for my share in the matter, I tell you plainly, if you keep me here much longer, you'll have to carry me home on your back, Mrs. Leicester, for walk I won't."

Thus urged the ladies confessed their fatigue, and their willingness to return; but there was still another gallery of paintings unseen, which the General evidently wished to visit. He had commissioned an artist to copy two or three of them, and he required Lord Bellefield's opinion as to the propriety of his choice. This occasioned a difficulty, which Laura met by proposing the following scheme—viz., that she, Annie, and Charley should leave the General and Lord Bellefield to their own devices, and taking a gondola, row to a point at which they would be within two minutes' walk of St. Mark's. Lord Bellefield made some slight remonstrance, and it was clear he disapproved of the scheme, but the General was peremptory, so he had no resource but to submit with the best grace he was able.

"Famous things gondolas are, to be sure," observed Charley, as, placing a cushion beneath his head, he stretched himself at full length under the awning; "they afford almost the only instance that has come under my notice in which the intensely romantic and the very decidedly comfortable go hand in hand—they cut out cabs, and beat 'busses into fits. Now, we only want a little melody to make the thing perfect—Laura, sing us a song!"

"Sing you asleep, you mean, you incorrigible——"

"There, that will do; don't become vituperative, you termagant," interrupted her husband. "Annie, dear, gentle cousin Annie, warble forth something romantic with your angel-voice, do, and I'll say you're——"

"What?" inquired Annie.

"A regular stunner!" was the reply.

"And if the epithet be at all appropriate, it clearly proves me unqualified for the office," returned Annie, smiling, "so you really must hold me excused."

"Then the long and short of the matter is that the duty devolves upon me," rejoined Charley, and slowly raising himself into a half sitting, half kneeling attitude, he placed himself at his wife's feet, after the fashion of those very interesting cavaliers who do the romantic on the covers of sentimental songs; then having played an inaudible prelude upon a supposititious guitar, he placed one hand upon his heart, and extending the other in a theatrical attitude towards the boatman, began—

"Gondolier, row—O!"

when, having extemporarily parodied the first verse of that popular melody, he was beginning the second with—

"Ain't this here go—
Glorious—oh—o——"

when the prow of the gondola struck against the steps where they were to land with so sharp a jerk as to pitch the singer on his hands and knees, and effectually check his vocalising. After discharging the boatman, they proceeded a short distance along the bank of the canal, and then turned down a narrow lane, or alley, leading to the square of St. Mark. In this Leicester was annoyed to perceive knots of disreputable-looking men talking rapidly, or hurrying along with eager gestures towards the square. Finding, as they advanced, that the crowd became thicker, Leicester paused, irresolute whether or not to proceed.

"Surely we had better turn back," urged Laura. "I should not be afraid if we were alone, for I know you could take care of me, but——," and she glanced towards Annie, who, although she said nothing, had turned very pale, and clung with convulsive energy to her cousin's arm. Charles looked back, and to his utter dismay perceived that the crowd behind had been increased by a fresh accession of numbers, and that their retreat was effectually cut off.

"There is nothing remaining for us but to keep on," he said; "the stream of people appears, fortunately, to be going our way, and all we can do is to go with it: I dare say they are too much engrossed by their own affairs to trouble their heads about us. Whatever occurs, don't let go my arm, either of you; it is rather disagreeable, certainly, but there is nothing to be really afraid of, and we shall reach home in five minutes."

Hoping these assertions, in regard to the truth of which he was himself somewhat sceptical, might suffice to reassure his companions, Leicester continued his course, occasionally annoyed by the pressure of the crowd, but not otherwise molested till they reached the square of Saint Mark. Here the sight that awaited them was by no means encouraging: the whole space was filled with a dense crowd of the lowest rabble of Venice, who, many of them the worse for liquor, appeared in a state of considerable excitement, and filled the air with mingled shouts, cries, and curses. To pass safely through such an assembly, with his attention divided between his two charges, appeared next to impossible, and thoroughly perplexed, Charles Leicester paused, unable to decide whether it were better to advance or attempt to retrace their steps. As he thus pondered a rush of people forced them forward, and they found themselves completely hemmed in by the crowd, while from the pressure of those around them Laura and Annie experienced the greatest difficulty in retaining their grasp of Charley's arm. Still no personal incivility was offered them, and Leicester began to hope they might gradually make their way across the square without actual danger, when a cry from Annie convinced him of his error. The cause of her alarm was as follows:—

One of that industrious fraternity (some members of which are to be met with in every large city) whose principles in regard to the rights of property are reprehensibly lax, attracted by the sparkling of a

valuable brooch in Annie's shawl, conceived the opportunity too good to be lost; accordingly, pressing close to her, he made a snatch at the ornament, seizing it so rudely as to tear open the shawl and partially drag it from her shoulders. As, alarmed by her cry, Charles turned to discover its cause, a tall figure sprang forward and wrested his spoil from the robber, flinging him off at the same time with such force that he staggered and fell; then addressing Leicester, the stranger said in a deep, stern voice, each accent of which thrilled through Annie's very soul—

“Make for the church steps—think only of protecting Mrs. Leicester. *I* will be answerable for this lady's safety.”

Then Annie was conscious that her shawl was replaced and carefully wrapped round her, and she felt herself half-led, half-carried forward by one before whose resistless strength all obstacles seemed, as it were, to melt away. How they passed through that yelling, maddened crowd she never knew, but ere she had well recovered from her first alarm at the ruffian's attack, she found herself placed on the steps of St. Mark's Church, her back leaning against a column, and the tall, dark figure of her preserver standing statue-like beside her, in such a position as to screen her from the pressure of the crowd. Involuntarily she glanced up at his features; hidden by the coat collar and slouched hat, the only portion of his face that remained visible was the tip of a black moustache, the proud, arched nostril, and the cold, stony gaze of two fierce black eyes, fixed upon her as though they would pierce her very soul. It was a look to haunt her to her dying day, and worse than all, *she understood it!* In a moment the idea flashed upon her. He *had* loved her! he knew she was about to marry his bitterest enemy, and now he *hated* her. Poor Annie, if mental agony could kill, that instant she had died. Lewis, thou art bitterly avenged!

CHAPTER LXII.

“POINTS A MORAL,” AND SO IT IS TO BE HOPED “ADORNS
A TALE.”

“WHAT is the next move?” inquired Leicester, coming up with his arm round his wife's waist, and his hat crushed into the shape of a biffin.

“Wait here for a few minutes,” returned Lewis, “the crowd is already dispersing in the direction of the Arsenal.”

“The Arsenal, what do they want there?” inquired Leicester.

“To waylay Marinovitch as he leaves the place, and murder him,” returned Lewis in a stern whisper, “but he has been warned of their design, and will of course take measures to ensure his safety.”

“Pleasant all this!” muttered Leicester, taking off his injured hat and endeavouring in some degree to restore its original shape; “here's a case of wanton destruction—glad it is not my head all the same. Now the coast seems pretty clear, suppose we move on.”

Coldly and silently Lewis resumed his office of guardian: the space

intervening between St. Mark's Church and the Palazzo Grassini was passed in safety, and they stood within the courtyard of Leicester's dwelling. Charley laid his hand on Lewis's shoulder.

"You will come in?" he said; "you are hot and tired, and require refreshment—a glass of wine?"

Lewis shook his head.

"It is impossible," he replied coldly; then adding, "I am happy to have been of use to—to Mrs. Leicester and yourself," he raised his hat slightly to Annie and turned to depart: recollecting however that he still held in his hand the brooch which he had rescued from the ruffian's clutches, he paused with the intention of giving it to Laura; but Laura had caught sight of "Tarley's" curly bead peeping out at her, and actuated by a sudden impulse of maternal affection, or for some other reason which we shall not attempt to fathom, she had tripped off in the direction of her self-willed offspring. Leicester was slowly following her, all his faculties apparently engrossed by a second attempt to reform his outraged hat. Lewis and Annie were left therefore virtually alone. Advancing towards her with an expression of countenance so cold and immovable that every feature might have been carved in marble, Lewis began—

"I beg pardon, I had forgotten to return your brooch."

It was the first time that morning he had personally addressed her, and his doing so appeared to break the spell which had kept her silent; she took the brooch from him, murmuring some indistinct words of thanks, then gaining courage as she proceeded, she glanced at him appealingly, saying—

"Strange as this meeting is, I am sure I cannot be mistaken—Mr. Arundel, have you quite forgotten me?"

As she uttered these words a kind of spasm passed across Lewis's face, and for a moment he appeared afraid to trust himself to speak; recovering, however, he replied in the same cold, measured tone which he had used throughout the adventure—

"No, Miss Grant, *I* (and he laid an emphasis on the pronoun, so light that a casual observer would not have detected it, and yet which shot a pang through Annie's heart that caused her colour to come and go, and her limbs to tremble) do not forget so quickly."

Unable to meet his glance, which she felt was fixed upon her, and scarcely conscious, in her agitation, of what she was saying, Annie faltered out—

"You will give my father an opportunity of thanking you, I hope; he will, I cannot doubt—that is, we shall all be glad to renew our intimacy with so old a friend."

Lewis paused ere he could trust himself to reply. Her evident emotion, the earnestness of her manner, half timid, half imploring, tended to soothe his wounded spirit and disarm his wrath; but the vision of the morning, in which he had seen her clinging to Lord Bellefield's arm and smiling upon him, was too fresh in his recollection, and the demon of pride and jealousy still retained full dominion over him.

"You must pardon me," he said, "I will reserve my visit to General

Grant till I can congratulate him on his daughter's marriage." Then raising his hat ceremoniously, he bowed to her, and was gone!

No traces of the tumultuous assembly, which had so greatly alarmed Laura and Annie, remained when Lord Bellefield and General Grant crossed the square of St. Mark on their return from the morning's sight-seeing. As they drew near the Palazzo Grassini, a tall lad in squalid raiment, leaning upon crutches, and with a patch over one eye, approached and begged of them. The General at first refused to listen to him, but becoming wearied by his pertinacity, felt in his pocket for something to give him.

"I have no small change about me," he remarked, after a minute's ineffectual search, "but you have, Bellefield; they gave you a handful of their stupid little coins at the last shop we went into. Lend me two or three, will you?"

As he mentioned his companion's name the beggar fixed his piercing eye on the features of the person addressed, scanning them eagerly, as though he sought to fix them indelibly in his memory. Returning his glance with a haughty stare, his lordship carelessly flung him a couple of *Zwanzigers* and passed on. The beggar watched his retreating figure till it was no longer visible, then turning quickly, hobbled with his crutches out of the square, continuing the same method of progression till he reached the nearest canal, when, looking round to assure himself that he was not observed, he coolly pitched his supporters into the water, removed the patch from his eye, which by no means seemed to require such a protection, walked briskly till he reached a spot where a small skiff was moored, springing into which he commenced rowing vigorously, and was soon hidden from sight by a bend of the canal.

When Lewis returned to his lodgings the following note awaited him:—

"My search is ended; I have found my sister in time to see her—die! Her seducer, heartless in his villainy, brought his victim to a foreign land, kept her in luxury till his fancy wearied of her, and then left her—to starve. My curse has little power, or it would have withered him long ago; but may the curse of that God who made him and her cleave to him until—I meet him. Sir, I know not how to thank you. She has told me how you warned her, how you explained to her his real character. She was infatuated, but it is not for me to judge her. We seem a doomed race, fatal alike to ourselves, to those we love, and to *those we hate*. Oh, that she could live! she is soft and gentle, and—ay! though a scoundrel has debased her, still I say it—she is good and pure, and she would have calmed my angry spirit; she would have taught me to love something human. But it was not to be: each hour that I sit by her I expect to be her last. She sends you her blessing; may God's go with it. "MILES H——"

Lewis could not peruse this letter without deep emotion. In the just, though, alas! ill-governed indignation which gave a rude eloquence even to the expression of this poor youth's outraged feeling, he traced a likeness to his former self. "Heartless in his villainy, he kept her in luxury till his fancy wearied of her, and then left her—to starve."

This was the man Annie Grant loved and was about to marry! Oh, how his heart bled for her! He pictured to himself her future life—how she would gradually, by slow and painful steps, discover her husband's true character, each advance in knowledge a new and separate misfortune, until love should become indifference, and indifference end in hatred. Even yet he might prevent it. His London agent had forwarded to him that morning an English newspaper containing an unmistakable allusion to the events of the Derby day, and openly declaring Lord Bellefield a defaulter. This shown to General Grant, and his tale of Hardy's daughter verified by the evidence now in his possession, the old soldier would sooner see his daughter lying dead at his feet than sanction her union with a man devoid alike of honour and of principle. But then came in pride. Had he known that Annie loved him, or had General Grant never mistrusted him, Lewis would have come forward without a moment's hesitation; but his motives had been once doubted, his affections betrayed, and his pride could neither forget nor forgive it. Besides, Lord Bellefield would attribute his interference to a feeling of petty malice; such was not the revenge for which, despite his principles and his reason, his soul still thirsted. So pride gained the day, though, tyrant-like, in the very midst of his triumph he made his victim miserable.

Unable to apply his mind to anything, he strolled out, trusting the evening air would allay the fever of his blood. After wandering about restlessly for some time he remembered that he had eaten nothing for many hours, and turning into the nearest casino he called for wine and biscuits. Having finished his frugal repast, he was about to leave the house when three persons entered, and crossing through the refreshment-room, passed into a salon which he knew to be devoted to play. One of the three, a short, insignificant-looking man, was a stranger to him, but the two others he recognised instantly—they were Walter and Lord Bellefield. A sudden impulse prompted him to follow them; at that time in the evening the salon was certain to be pretty well filled, and Lewis trusted to avoid observation by mixing with the crowd, relying on the alteration in his appearance to escape recognition, even if he were perceived either by Walter or Lord Bellefield. Accordingly, waiting his opportunity, he joined a group of Italians, who, eagerly talking over the attempt upon the life of Colonel Marinovitch (which had been frustrated by his escaping on board the corvette which guarded the harbour), scarcely perceived this addition to their party. Entering with them, and still keeping in the background, he took up a position whence he could observe the proceedings of those for both of whom he felt an interest equally deep, though so utterly distinct in character.

Lord Bellefield, who appeared unusually listless and indifferent, lounged up to the table and staked a few Napoleons on the chances of the game; then, drawing forward a chair he seated himself, and continued carelessly to watch the proceedings of the other players. But despite the presence of the man he hated, Lewis's attention soon became wholly absorbed in observing Walter. From his entire

conduct it was evident that this was by no means his first visit to the salon; on the contrary, it was only too plain that a taste for gambling had been implanted in the poor boy's feeble yet obstinate mind. That he clearly understood the nature of the game Lewis could not believe, but that he had acquired sufficient insight into the rules to enable him to adhere to them, and that he was keenly alive to the results of the deal, or the throw, elated when he won and depressed when he lost, was most certain.

The third person of the party, whom Lewis rightly conjectured to be his successor in the office of tutor, did not play himself, but appeared to take great interest in Walter's game, looking over his cards and advising him what to do. Lewis also noticed that whenever Walter won he always received gold, but that his losses were paid in paper money, and the truth immediately occurred to him—viz., that, child-like, the poor boy only attached value to the glittering coin, and that the worth of the bank-notes had been completely misrepresented to him, so that he believed himself winning when in fact he was losing considerable sums. Moreover, from certain glances which passed between Mr. Spooner and the proprietor of the salon, who held the bank, Lewis became convinced that some secret understanding existed by which the tutor shared in the profits.

That Lord Bellefield was entirely ignorant of all that was passing before his eyes Lewis could not conceive, while at the same time the trifling nature of the stakes rendered it most unlikely that he could have any personal interest in the affair; the probability therefore was that he saw what was going on but felt totally indifferent as to the matter. This view was confirmed when, as Walter grew more excited, began playing higher, and at last staked ten Napoleons upon one cast, Mr. Spooner approached Lord Bellefield and whispered something in his ear, to which his friend replied carelessly, "Oh, let him have his fling while he's in the humour;" then in a lower tone he added, "*I'm not blind!* but the money is, I dare say, of more use in your pocket than in his, so you'll be the greater fool of the two if you attempt to prevent him."

Spooner appeared again to urge some difficulty, to which Lord Bellefield rejoined with a sneering laugh, "Yes, it suits *you* charmingly to assume the rôle of the innocent! Can't you get him to sign another bond payable when he comes of age? Tortoni will no more refuse to cash it than he did on a former occasion;" then smiling again, he added, "I tell you I am not blind, *mon ami*, but 'tis no concern of mine; I am not the lout's guardian, Heaven be thanked." Although from the position in which he stood Lewis only caught a word or two here and there of this conversation, yet his quick apprehension supplied the blanks with sufficient correctness, and the whole villainy of the thing burst upon him. Here was a man engaged to educate and watch over the poor, feeble-minded being before him abusing the power thus entrusted to him to lead him to evil, and availing himself of the imbecility he was bound to protect to swindle his helpless charge; while Lord Bellefield, whose duty it was to denounce such practices to General Grant the instant he suspected them, had

evidently not only no intention of doing so, but sat coolly looking on, smiling with a fiend-like satisfaction at each fresh development of human wickedness.

As Lewis watched Walter's flushed cheeks, eager eyes, and hands which trembled as they were stretched out to receive the gold which this time he had been allowed to win; as he marked the lines which excitement and the permitted indulgence of a capricious, obstinate temper had traced upon his smooth brow and round the corners of his mouth, all his old affection for the poor boy rushed back upon him, and his just anger grew to such a pitch that he could scarcely repress it. At this moment a fresh deal had begun.

"I will win more," exclaimed Walter eagerly; "Mr. Spooner, tell him I want to double my stake."

"But that has been done already," was the reply; "the dealer has doubled every one's stake this time."

"Then I will double that," returned Walter, carried away by the excitement of the game; "tell him so, I say."

Spooner appeared for a moment undecided; the stake, thus quadrupled, amounted to forty Napoleons, and alarmed at its magnitude, he glanced in irresolution towards Lord Bellefield. A look of undisguised contempt for his pusillanimity was the only reply his lordship vouchsafed; goaded on by which, Spooner turned to comply with his pupil's direction.

But Lewis could bear it no longer; regardless of consequences, he strode across the room and laid his hand upon Walter's shoulder, saying as he did so, in a gentle though determined voice, "Walter, you must not play for such high stakes."

With a cry of mingled joy and surprise Walter sprang from his seat, gazed earnestly at Lewis's features, then exclaiming, "Oh, you have come back at last!" threw himself upon his friend's breast with a burst of tears. Much affected, Lewis returned his embrace, and leading him carefully to a seat, waited till he should recover from his surprise and emotion. In the meantime the game had come to a standstill, the bystanders, consisting chiefly of foreigners, being as much charmed by such a scene as an Englishman would have been annoyed at it. The moment quiet was in some degree restored, the proprietor, mindful of his own interest, resumed his deal, inquiring with a glance at Spooner what sum his young friend had staked. Spooner paused, but Lord Bellefield, who had risen and with lowering brow approached the scene of action, prompted him, and he replied, "Forty Napoleons."

Lewis's eye flashed. "It is at your peril you do this," he said; "my first act on quitting this place shall be to inform General Grant of the manner in which you betray the trust he has reposed in you."

Spooner turned pale; but relying on Lord Bellefield's support, managed to stammer out, "And pray, sir, who the deuce may you be?"

"I will tell you, and this worshipful company also," exclaimed Lord Bellefield, stepping forward. "This fellow is, or rather was, a menial in General Grant's household, discarded for insolent behaviour, and

as such unfit for the society of gentlemen, into which as he has now ventured to intrude himself, I, for one, vote he be ignominiously expelled."

This speech caused, as might be expected, a sensation throughout the room, and the bystanders congregated round Lewis and Lord Bellefield, glancing from one to the other, to discover from their bearing and appearance which was the true man, and which the false. Up to this moment Lewis had been wrapped in a large Spanish cloak; he now allowed it to glide from his shoulders, as, advancing a step, he boldly confronted his adversary.

"Your lordship has been pleased to speak explicitly," he said; "were I inclined to follow your example, I might, with some shadow of truth, denounce you as a ruined blackleg and an outlawed defaulter; but I prefer simply declaring that in the statement you have just made you have maliciously and unequivocally—**LIED!**"

As he spoke he raised his head proudly, and folding his arms across his breast, waited the effect of his words. He was not kept long in suspense. However numerous might be Lord Bellefield's faults, a want of personal courage was not one of them. As Lewis referred to the cause of his ignominious exile his face grew pale with rage, but when he gave him the lie his fury became uncontrollable. Springing forward with a leap like that of a maddened tiger, he struck Lewis a violent blow on the cheek, which, firmly as his feet were planted, staggered him, exclaiming as he did so—

"Take that, beggar!" Instead of rushing on his adversary, as those amongst the spectators who knew him (and there were several who did so) expected, Lewis, recovering himself, stood for an instant regarding Lord Bellefield with a smile of triumph, though to those who remarked him closely there was an expression in his eyes which, in spite of themselves, caused them to shudder, while, strange to say, he was drawing a soiled *white kid glove* on his right hand; having done so, he advanced a step, saying in a stern, deep voice—

"Your Lordship is too generous—the beggar returns your almsgiving—thus!"

As he spoke there was a sudden movement in the crowd—a frightful blow was struck, and Lord Bellefield lay insensible on the ground, the blood flowing from a cut on his forehead, whilst over him stood Lewis, his mouth set, and his eyes burning with the fire of hatred. Several of the bystanders sprang forward to assist the fallen man, but Lewis sternly motioned them back.

"Wait," he said,—his voice sounded deep and hollow, and there was something in the expression of his face which quelled the stoutest heart amongst those who stood around him,—drawing the glove from the hand which had struck the blow, he dipped it in the blood that still trickled from the forehead of the fallen man, muttering to himself as he did so, "*That, then, has come to pass—is the rest to follow?*" He next examined the countenance of his prostrate foe—"He is merely stunned," he said; "raise him, and bring water to bathe his temples." As he spoke he assisted those who stepped forward to lift the injured man and place him on a chair; having done so, he left him to the

care of the bystanders, and again folding his arms, stood coolly awaiting the issue.

The event justified his predictions: on the first application of the cold water Lord Bellefield revived, and in less time than could have been expected, the bleeding, which was very slight, was arrested. As soon as he had recovered sufficiently to speak, he said, addressing a young Italian of rank, with whom he was acquainted, and who had been bathing his temples with the cold water—

“Rastelli, you may inform that scoundrel that he has succeeded; rather than allow him to escape with impunity, I will undergo the degradation of meeting him.” He spoke in a low, faint voice, but the expression with which he glanced towards Lewis as he pronounced the word “scoundrel” was one of undying hatred.

“If your Lordship intended to apply that observation to the Signore Luigi, I shall have the felicity to explain that your Excellency labours under a mistake; that gentleman is the son of a gallant officer, with whom I have had the honour to serve in more than one campaign. It is no condescension in any one under the rank of a Royal Prince to meet the son of the brave Captain Arundel.”

The speaker was an old General Officer in the Austrian service, who possessed a European reputation, and whose dictum on all points of honour was conclusive. Lord Bellefield bit his under-lip in anger and vexation, cursing his own hastiness which had elicited this vindication of his enemy: perceiving, however, that he should only place himself still more completely in the wrong by any attempt to impugn the old Austrian's statement, he merely bowed haughtily in reply, then desiring to be shown into a private room, he took Rastelli's arm and quitted the salon.

Lewis stood gazing after his late opponent with a dark and troubled countenance; it was not remorse that he experienced, for were the deed to have been done over again, he would not have shrunk from its performance; and yet the feeling which engrossed him partook of a remorseful character—it seemed to him as though he had now lost all power of free will—he had taken the first step, and THE REST must follow; there was no longer any possibility of turning back. Like one walking in his sleep, he permitted himself to be led into another room—he heard, as in a dream, Rastelli enter and make arrangements with a young Austrian officer who had volunteered to act as his second for his meeting: Lord Bellefield at daybreak. As the person challenged, he had the choice of weapons, but he waived his right, and allowed his opponent to select pistols. Ehrenburg (his second) whispered to him that Lord Bellefield was reported to be a dead shot, but an indifferent swordsman.

“The more reason to allow him to choose pistols,” was Lewis's careless reply.

Ehrenburg still urged the madness of throwing away a chance. “It will be no boy's play,” he said; “mark my words, Luigi, this duel will be one for life or death.”

“Do you think I do not know it?” returned Lewis sternly, “ay, as well as if I now saw him lying dead before my feet,” and

as he spoke an involuntary shudder passed through his powerful frame.

"May not another contingency be possible, *buon' amico?* especially if you allow him to secure the advantage of pistols?" suggested Ehrenburg.

"Would to Heaven it might so occur," was Lewis's eager reply; "I hope no better fate than to die by his hand, believe me; but it will not be so—I know—I feel it? Ehrenburg, that man has stood like some evil spirit across my path; time after time he has heaped insult upon me; once, coward-like, the assassin sought my life; but till to-night I have never opposed him. Why? because it is written here" (and he touched his forehead) "that when the final struggle shall come, my destiny is stronger than his, and he must perish. You may smile and deem my words the mere ravings of superstition, but you will see, *if* we meet to-morrow morning, Bellefield will never leave the ground alive, and I shall quit it with the brand of Cain upon my brow."

He spoke so gravely and with such an evident belief in the reality of his convictions, that for a moment Ehrenburg himself felt impressed. But a duel was no very uncommon event with the young Austrian: he had been principal on two occasions, when no serious result had followed, and second on half-a-dozen more; besides, he was essentially a practical man. So he merely shrugged his shoulders, hinted that Lewis's nerves might be excited, which would produce these little fancies, advised him to take a cup of coffee, and then repair to the shooting-gallery and practise steadily for an hour or so to get his hand in, promised to be with him in good time on the following morning, inquired whether he could be of any further assistance, and then strolling back to the gaming-table, relieved Lewis of his presence.

To gain his lodgings and lock himself into his studio was scarcely the work of five minutes; then flinging himself upon the first seat that came in his way, he gave himself up to bitter thoughts. Two years ago he had fled his country, had quitted all who were dear to him, because his fiery passions were beyond his control—because he had loved too deeply and hated too bitterly. He had plunged into a life of wild adventure to dissipate his feelings; he had schooled his heart in solitude; he had devoted all his energies to the acquirement of an art; nay, he had devoted the first efforts of the skill he had thus gained to embody a visible representation of the danger of ill-bestowed love and the curse of gratified revenge; and *this* was the result!

He remained for a few minutes with his head resting on his hands, apparently stunned by his conflicting feelings; then rousing himself by an effort, he heaved a deep sigh and drew out *the glove*. As his eye fell upon the stain of blood, he shuddered, and hastily putting it from him, began pacing up and down the apartment. An antique lamp hung by a chain from the ceiling, throwing its light strongly on the two pictures from the "Giaour." Involuntarily Lewis paused before them, and remained gazing from one to the other with an expression of remorse and horror. "Am I indeed about to realise these creations of my gloomy fancy?" he murmured; "shall I become that human tiger, that stony, soulless image of impenitent despair! Revenge,

how I have thirsted for it! how, when writhing under that man's insults, I have pictured to myself the day of reckoning, and deemed life itself would be a cheap sacrifice for one hour of unlimited vengeance; and now, when this coveted boon lies within my grasp, I see it in its true light, and own this wished-for blessing to be a dark, consuming curse. Seen through the distorted medium of outraged feeling, retribution appeared an act of justice. The demon wore an angel's form. But viewed in its true aspect, the sentiment is that which leads to murder, and the deed, with its sickening details, revolting butchery. Yet, seeing this clearly, knowing to what it will lead, I *must* go on: I owe *him* satisfaction. Satisfaction!" and he smiled at the mocking term. "Yes," he resumed, "I *must* go on, even if I wished to turn back. If I *could* forego my revenge and forgive him, it is now too late. Well, be it so; 'tis weakness to repine at the inevitable. I will meet my fate boldly, be it what it may; and for him, he has brought the punishment upon his own head, and must abide the issue!" He resumed his walk up and down the apartment; then a new idea struck him. "What a strange expression her features wore when she ventured to address me," he said; "and in the crowd she did not shrink from me, but trusted herself to me with a gentle, child-like confidence." He paused, pressed his hand to his forehead, then exclaimed, "O God, if I have wronged her—if"—and here his voice sank almost to a whisper—"if, Heaven help me, she should have loved me after all!"

Completely overwrought by these conflicting emotions, Lewis sank into a chair, and burying his face in his hands, struggled in vain for composure, a deep-drawn, choking sob from time to time attesting his mental agony. How long he remained in this position he never knew. It might have been minutes, for he took no note of things external; it might have been hours, for a lifetime of heartfelt desolation appeared crowded into that dark reverie. He was aroused at length by a tap at the door, which, as at first he could scarcely collect his ideas sufficiently to attend to such sublunary matters, soon grew into a loud and impatient knocking with the handle of a stick or *umbrella*. Imagining it to be one of his artist friends, come probably to bring him information in regard to the late disturbances, he replied in Italian that he was particularly engaged and could not see any one.

"Polite and encouraging, certainly," muttered a deep-toned voice, at the first sound of which Lewis sprang from his seat and listened with an eager yet half incredulous expression of countenance. "A thousand and one pardons, Signor," continued the person on the outside, speaking in Italian, with a peculiarity of accent which proved him to be unaccustomed to pronounce the language, or probably even to hear it spoken; "but you really must condescend to see me, even if Diabolus himself is supping with you, and there is only macaroni enough for two."

Without a moment's hesitation Lewis flung open the door, and there *in propria personæ* stood Richard Frere *and* the cotton umbrella!

"Frere, dear old fellow! is it, can it indeed be you?" exclaimed Lewis joyfully, forgetting for the moment everything in the surprise of welcoming such an unexpected visitant.

"Yes, it's me," returned Frere, squeezing and shaking his friend's hand as if he had a design of reducing it to a jelly. "Richard's himself, and no mistake. Lewis isn't *himself*, though, it seems, but Signore Luigi, forsooth. I had hard work to find you, I can tell you. But good gracious! what has happened to the man?" he exclaimed, catching sight of Lewis's bearded face and pale, haggard features, "why, he has turned into somebody else, bodily as well as in name. You look just like one of these horrid Italian fellows, with the proper tragic expression of countenance which they get up by way of advertising that they are ready and willing to cut throats at half-a-crown a windpipe, country orders punctually executed, and the business performed in a neat and tradesman-like manner; but tell me seriously, you're not ill?"

"Not in body, nor usually in mind either," was the reply; "but to-day events have occurred which have thoroughly unmanned me, still I shall 'win through it,' somehow; and now tell me of yourself, of Rose, of my mother—they are well?"

"A good deal better than you seem to be," growled Frere, who during this speech had been attentively observing his friend's features; "however, I'll soon satisfy your curiosity—and then you shall satisfy mine," he added in an undertone, and removing a wonderful species of travelling cap, he followed Lewis, who led the way to his inner apartment, and then listened eagerly to Frere's account of the various events which had taken place since he had quitted his native land. Rose, by Frere's special desire, had, in writing to her brother, hitherto forborne to allude to her engagement; the worthy bear, with a characteristic mixture of deep-seated humility and surface vanity, fearing that Lewis might not think him a fitting match for his sister, and therefore feeling anxious that the matter should be disclosed to him in the wisest and most judicious manner possible—*i.e.*, by himself *viva voce*. Thus, after having spoken of various less important matters, Frere was gradually working his way towards the interesting disclosure with a degree of nervous diffidence quite unusual to him, when Lewis, whose attention began to flag, brought him to the point by exclaiming, "And about Rose, what is she doing: she tells me in her letters she still writes for some magazine; but is she looking well? does she seem happy? though I suppose," he continued, trying to hide his state of mind by falling in with his friend's jesting mode of speech, "these are minor particulars into which it never occurs to your wisdom to inquire. I know your old habit of practically ignoring the existence of women as a sex, regarding them as a race of unscientific nonentities fitted only 'to suckle fools and chronicle small beer.'"

Frere for a moment looked rather disconcerted; then veiling his discomfiture under an affectation of rough indifference, he replied, "I can tell you one 'minor particular,' as you call it, and that is the fact of the young lady in question being engaged to be married."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lewis, starting, "you are probably joking," he continued seriously; "but you know not, dear old friend, how deeply such tidings might affect me at this moment; you know not—"

how should you?—the mood of mind in which you find me ; but tell me in a word, is there any earnest in what you have said ? ”

“ In a word,” muttered Frere, “ hum ! concise and epigrammatical that ! but I’ll try to accommodate you, so here goes by way of answer. Yes ! ”

“ And she has never even hinted at such a fact in her letters,” exclaimed Lewis ; “ out of sight, out of mind, indeed. I may have—Heaven help me !—I *have* neglected my trust, in my self-engrossment ; but I did not think Rose would have been the person thus to visit my sins upon my head. Who is the man ? ” he continued sternly. In the whole course of his existence Frere had never felt more uncomfortable ; all his old diffidence and humility rushed upon him, and for the moment he felt as if he had been suddenly detected in an act of petty larceny ; however, his sturdiness of nature and common sense came to his rescue, and he replied, “ It is no fault of Rose’s, for I made it an especial point that she should not tell you of her engagement by letter.”

“ You did, and wherefore ? ” inquired Lewis in surprise.

“ Because I chose to tell you myself,” returned Frere. “ Your sister is not an angel, for angels live in heaven and not on earth, but she is the most lovable, the most pure-minded, decidedly the sweetest-looking woman (though that does not so much signify) in this world, and I should have added, the most sensible, only that she has, in her tenderness of heart, seen fit to promise to marry a rough, uncouth animal like me. Lewis, old fellow,” he continued in a faltering voice, “ I know better than you can do how unworthy I am of such a blessing, but if loving her better than my own life gives me any title to possess her, Heaven knows that I do so.”

When Frere reached that point in his peroration at which he mentioned Rose’s promise to marry him, his auditor started, and raising his eyes, murmured an ejaculation of fervent thankfulness. As he concluded, Lewis clasped his hand eagerly in his own, saying, “ My dear old Frere, you know not how happy you have made me ; one great weight, which was crushing my soul to the dust ere you appeared, is removed by your words. Of all men living you are the one I would have selected for my dearest Rose’s husband ; and now, if I—that is to say, whatever befalls me she will be happy.”

“ Then you are not disappointed ? ” rejoined Frere, greatly relieved ; “ you know you used at one time to be just a very little bit ambitious, and I fancied you might have been cherishing some splendid scheme for marrying Rose to a duke—she’s good enough for the best of ’em, even if dukes were what they should be, instead of what they are too many of ’em. Well, I’m very glad !—but now about yourself—‘ if anything befalls you,’ you say ; pray what is likely to befall you more than any other people ? and what do you mean by being crushed by a weight, and by looking so melodramatically miserable ? ”

Lewis heaved a deep sigh, and then replied, “ You speak jestingly ; but there are many melodramas less strange than my wayward fortune : such as it is, however, I have provoked and will go through with it. Frere, you love Rose for her own sake, be kind to and forbearing with

my mother for mine—she has many faults, a giddy head, an impulsive disposition (than which there can be no greater temptation), but a warm heart—and—and I feel I have never done a son's duty by her. Frere, you will take care of her?"

The events of the day and evening had well-nigh exhausted even Lewis's untiring energy, and the sight of Frere arriving so unexpectedly had brought back to him so many home memories, recollections of earlier days, ere with the strength and freedom of manhood had come its trials and its sins, that as he thought of these old associations and remembered kindnesses slighted, affection cast away, duties neglected, for the sake of that one master-passion, he forgot for the time the wrongs he usually felt so keenly, and remorse for his selfish neglect overwhelmed him and caused his voice to falter and his eyes to grow dim with the mist of unshed tears. Frere perceived his emotion, and waited till it had in a degree subsided; then going up to him, he laid his hand on his shoulder caressingly, saying, "Come, Lewis, we have known each other from boyhood; we have long been brothers in affection, and are soon about to become so in name, associated by a still nearer tie—we never used to have secrets from each other, and should not do so now. I have learned from Rose the cause you have had for sorrow, and for two years have suffered you to try your own method of cure, without attempting to interfere with you, but I now see that the experiment has failed, and that you are miserable—is it not so?"

Lewis bowed his head in token of assent, he could not trust himself to speak.

"We are not placed in this world to be miserable," continued Frere; "true, this life is a state of trial, and it would not be so if we had not many evils, temptations, and sorrows to endure; but by God's help the evils may be borne, the temptations overcome, and the sorrow turned to joy, if we do not oppose our will to His; but if we do, sin lieth at the door, we league ourselves with the enemy of mankind, and misery must come of it. Do not misunderstand me," he added kindly; "I do not seek to blame you, I can have no pleasure in so doing, but on the contrary deepest pain; still it is evident your mind is diseased, and if in probing the wound to discover the nature of the evil I hurt you, you must pardon me for the sake of the object I have in view. But I am talking at random, for want of a more clear insight into the cause of your present difficulty. Come, be frank and open with me; let us face the evil boldly, and between us devise some means of overcoming it."

"What brought you here?" exclaimed Lewis, suddenly raising his head and fixing his piercing eyes full upon his friend's countenance.

Frere smiled a melancholy smile. "Hot-headed, petulant, and jealous of interference yet!" he said. "My poor Lewis, I did not come to catechise you—affairs of quite another nature brought me here: I am trying to carry out an arrangement between my uncle Ashford and your *ci-devant* foe, Lord Bellefield." As he mentioned Lord Bellefield's name Lewis shuddered, and his eyes again sought the ground. "And now that I have cleared up this alarming doubt,"

resumed Frere, "tell me what ails you, for that you are miserable, and that I mean to know wherefore, and do my best to render you otherwise, are two self-evident facts."

"'Tis useless," returned Lewis in a low voice; "the die is cast, and neither you nor any one else can help me. Would to Heaven you had come a day sooner and taken me away from this accursed place; as it is, my own mad passion has hurried me on, and my fate is fixed. Now," he continued, glancing at the clock, which stood at a quarter to twelve, "I must ask you to leave me—we may meet to-morrow—or—if anything should prevent it—and if—if I have not an opportunity of telling you all you seek to know—my papers—that is, I will leave you a letter explaining everything—good-night." Scarcely able to control his voice in this which Lewis felt might too probably be a last farewell, he hurried through the speech in a strange, almost incoherent manner.

Frere regarded him fixedly. "Unless you condescend to explain to me what you purpose doing within the next twenty-four hours," he said, "I'll not leave you till that time has expired. I tell you what it is, Lewis; I have not lived three-and-thirty years in the world without having learned to read men's faces, and I read in yours that you are standing on the verge of some great folly, madness, or—crime; and now, what is it?"

Lewis paused for a moment in deep thought, and then said calmly, "Sit down, Frere; you are an Englishman, and a man of highly honourable feeling; moreover, you are my oldest, my most cherished friend. I am, as you say, maddened by circumstances and on the verge of a great crime; sit down, I will tell you all, and you shall judge between God and man, and me."

Calmly, clearly, truthfully, in the deep silence of night, did Lewis recount to his friend the strange passages with which the reader is already acquainted; he related the simple facts, whether they told for or against him, just as they occurred; without entering into unnecessary detail he left nothing important unsaid, till Frere had conceived a clear idea of Lewis's whole career from the hour he entered Broadhurst to the moment in which he was speaking.

"The upshot of all this is," observed Lewis in conclusion, "that I am weary of life; littleness, brutality, and oppression in man, weakness and treachery in woman, and the tyranny of passion in oneself, render this world an incipient hell. To-morrow must end it one way or the other—either he will shoot me or I shall shoot him; the latter contingency I shall not long survive; such remorse as I should feel would be unendurable. To save myself from the guilt of suicide I shall volunteer into some fighting regiment engaged in these civil broils—Tyrian or Trojan, Austrian or Venetian, I care little; my sympathies side with one, my associations with the other, and with either I may obtain the only prize I covet—a soldier's death."

"Now listen to me, Lewis," returned Frere gravely. "I once at your own request promised you that *while we both lived I would never give you up, but would stand between you and your fiery passions,* and I thank God who in his mercy has sent me here at this particular

moment to enable me to fulfil my engagement. You have suffered, and are suffering deeply, and from my heart I pity you; but seeing, as I do only too clearly, the cause of all this misery, it would be no kindness in me to omit to point it out to you. Your two leading faults of character, pride and an overweening degree of self-confidence, are at the bottom of it all. Pride made Lord Bellefield your enemy—when he offered money for the dog he never intended to insult you; your proud answer irritated his pride, and from that time forth he sought to injure you—evil produced evil, dislike grew to hatred, hatred begat revenge, revenge cherished only required opportunity to become developed into assault and murder; that opportunity has now arrived, you have been guilty of the first, you contemplate the second. So much for pride—now for self-confidence. You imagined nothing could tempt you to forget your dependent position in General Grant's family (a position which your pride led you falsely to consider a degradation) so far as to forfeit your self-respect by loving Annie, so you permitted yourself to enjoy her society till your affections were beyond your own control—mistake number one. Then self-confidence whispered that it would be heroic to overcome this passion, so instead of avoiding the danger, you stayed to brave it till you had sacrificed your happiness, if not hers also—mistake number two. Still untaught by experience, in your own strength you endeavoured to crush out the memory of the past; still thinking only of self, you fled your country, recklessly severing ties and neglecting duties. Two years' vain struggling have proved your boasted strength to be abject weakness, unable to save you from becoming the slave of your evil passions, and I arrive here to find you contemplating the sin of—well, if I call it murder you will deem that I exaggerate, so I will say the sin of gambling in a lottery of manslaughter, with every chance against you." Lewis again raised his eyes to Frere's face as he replied calmly, but in a cold, hard tone of voice—

"You have described my miserable career barshly indeed, but in the main truly. You profess yourself my friend—in making this painful recapitulation therefore I presume you to have some friendly object; what is it?"

"First to exhibit to you the disease, then to point out the remedy," returned Frere.

"And if you can do this," exclaimed Lewis—"if, remembering what I am, you can show me how I might have avoided my errors in the past, how I may do aught to retrieve them in the future, I will indeed reckon you my friend—nay, I will bless your coming as that of an angel sent from heaven to aid a desperate, well-nigh a despairing man."

"Pray what religion do you profess?" asked Frere abruptly.

Lewis started, but recovering himself, replied coldly, "The same as you do yourself."

"And do you believe in the truth of it?"

"Why ask such a question?" returned Lewis with a slight degree of annoyance perceivable in his tone; "whatever may have been my faults, I am no infidel."

"I will tell you why I ask," replied Frere; "because, though you confess with your lips the truths of Christianity, in your life you have practically denied them."

Lewis made no answer, and Frere continued in an earnest, impressive voice, his manner becoming every moment more animated as he grew excited with his subject—

"If, as you say you do not doubt, Christianity be true, it amounts to this. The God who made and governs this world has been pleased to reveal to us His will—namely, that if we believe in Him and obey Him, He will save us from eternal misery and bestow upon us eternal happiness. To enable us to fulfil the second condition, that of obedience, He has given us a code, not so much of laws as of principles of action, by which we may become a law to ourselves. In order to demonstrate how these abstract principles are applicable to the exigencies of our mundane career, He sent His Son into the world, 'a man subject to like passions as ourselves, only without sin,' because he was a consistent embodiment of the doctrines he taught. Now had you taken these precepts, to which you accord an unpractical and therefore an equally senseless and useless belief, as the rule of your actions, how different a result would have followed; instead of provoking animosity by haughty looks and proud words, you would have remembered that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath;' instead of returning evil for evil, you would have considered the example of Him, who 'when He was reviled, reviled not again,' and called to mind His precepts, 'resist not evil, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;' instead of seeking to avenge your own quarrel by deeds of violence, which outrage nature, and bring their own punishment with them even here, in the pangs of conscience, you would have thought of His words who hath said, 'Vengeance is *Mine*, I will repay,' and left your cause in His hands. Instead of attempting to do everything in your own strength, and failing thus miserably, you would have recollected that 'God's strength is made perfect in our weakness,' and prayed to Him for support and assistance. Even now, instead of having recklessly determined to expose yourself to the chance of committing what you own to be a crime of such frightful magnitude, that the remorse it must entail on you would be unbearable, the question would be, not, how at any sacrifice you must vindicate your honour in the eyes of men, but 'how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'" He paused, then asked abruptly, "Do you admit all this?"

Lewis's features worked convulsively, as in a hollow, broken voice he replied, "Yes I do, God help me!"

"And He will help you," returned Frere, "if your repentance is indeed sincere; but that must be proved by acts, not words—Will you give up your revenge, and agree not to meet Lord Bellefield to-morrow?"

"No, by Heaven!" exclaimed Lewis fiercely, springing to his feet. "The sole possession my father bequeathed to me was his name and his spotless honour, and it shall never be said that he left them to one whom men had a right to call coward."

"And yet a coward you are," returned Frere sternly, "not in the particular of brute courage, shared with you by the tiger and the wolf, but in the far higher attribute of moral courage, the martyr spirit which enables the highest order of minds to endure the scorn of worldly men, rather than offend God and degrade themselves by the commission of evil. I will ask one more question, and then I have done with you: you say you believe in a future and eternal life—are you fitted to enter upon that life to-morrow through the dark portal of a sudden and violent death?"

As Frere uttered these awful words, in a tone of the deepest solemnity, Lewis, who had been impatiently pacing the room, stopped short as though arrested in his course by a thunderstroke. Placing his hand to his brow, he staggered as if about to fall, and Frere sprang up to support him. Recovering himself, he murmured—

"I must be alone, in half-an-hour you shall know my decision."

Then opening the door, he motioned to Frere to await him in the painting-room, and closing it after him, locked it. What passed in that half-hour—how, prostrate before the Great White Throne, the proud man wrestled with his agony, can be known but to One, the Searcher of Hearts. When, at the expiration of the prescribed time, the door was gently unclosed and Frere entered, he found Lewis, pale indeed and trembling, but calm as a little child.

"Bless you, dear old friend!" he said, "*Truth and you have conquered*; I place myself in your hands—do with me as you will."

CHAPTER LXIII.

SHOWS HOW IT FARED WITH THE LAMB WHICH THE WOLF HAD WORRIED.

ABOUT nine o'clock in the evening marked by the occurrence of the events narrated in the last chapter, General Grant was informed that a young man, who refused to give his name, requested five minutes' private conversation with him. Somewhat surprised at this demand, the General followed the servant into an apartment used by Charles Leicester as a study, and desired that the person might be shown in; in another moment a tall, swarthy young fellow, dressed in the garb usually worn by the lower classes in Venice, made his appearance. As soon as the servant had quitted the room, the stranger presented a note to the General, saying, "If you will read that, sir, you will perceive the object of my visit, and learn the necessity which forces me to intrude upon you at such an untimely hour."

The note, which was written in a delicate but somewhat illegible female hand, ran as follows:—

"A dying woman implores you, sir, to visit her; not for her own sake, for her hope rests in God and not in man, but for the sake of one who must be dearest to you in the world—your daughter. The writer has information to impart to you which may save you and her from years of deepest misery. The bearer of this note will conduct

you safely to one who again implores you by all you hold sacred not to neglect this summons, or delay returning with the messenger, lest you should arrive *too late*. The writer pledges her word, the word of one about to enter upon eternity, that you shall return safely."

"This is a very strange note," observed General Grant, suspiciously eyeing the young man, who stood awaiting his decision; "how am I to know that this is not some cunningly devised scheme, dangerous to my life or liberty?"

"I swear to you that you may safely trust me," replied the stranger eagerly; "adopt what precautions you will, leave your money, or aught that is of value, at home—take pistols with you, and if you see any signs of treachery, shoot me through the head. I *could* tell you that which would render you as eager to accompany me as you now appear unwilling to do so, but I have promised to leave *her* to explain the affair as seems to her best—she is my sister, and dying; if you delay you will arrive too late."

"You are an Englishman, I presume?" inquired the General, still undecided.

"I am so," was the reply, "and have served my country on board a man-of-war."

"A sailor! what was your captain's name, and what ship did you belong to?" demanded the General.

"The *Prometheus*'—Captain Manvers," was the concise answer.

"Were you in her during the year 18—?" continued his questioner, and receiving a reply in the affirmative, added, "Where were you stationed then?"

"We accompanied a convoy of transports, taking the —th and —th foot to Madras, and then proceeded to China," was the answer.

The General nodded approvingly. "Quite true," he said; "Captain Manvers is a friend of my own, and I know his vessel to have been then employed as you have stated. I will trust you; wait five minutes while I prepare to accompany you."

Within the time he had mentioned General Grant returned, wrapped in a military cloak, beneath which he wore a belt supporting a sabre and a brace of pistols.

"If I do not return in two hours, give this note to Mr. Leicester," he said to the servant who attended them to the door; then motioning to the stranger to precede him, he quitted the Palazzo Grassini. Leaving the square of St. Mark they advanced towards the Rialto; crossing this, and passing the fruit and vegetable market beyond, they reached a spot where a gondola was moored. Having stepped into it, the General, on a signal from his guide, seated himself near the stern, while the young sailor took an oar and assisted his companion in propelling the light vessel. Having proceeded some short distance in this manner, the rowers paused at a flight of steps. Here the stranger signified to General Grant that they must disembark; then resuming his office of guide, he led the way along the banks of the canal, and through courts and narrow alleys, inhabited by the lower orders of Venice, till he stopped before a rude door. At this he tapped twice in a peculiar manner. An old crone appeared in obedience to his sum-

mons, and cautiously unclosing the door, admitted them. Taking a lamp from her hand, the young man led the way up a steep flight of stairs, closely followed by his companion.

"Wait one minute," he said as they reached the top; returning almost immediately, he continued in a low whisper—

"She is awake and perfectly collected, but appears sinking fast; she is anxious to see you without delay; tread as lightly as possible, and follow me."

Advancing a few steps, he opened the door of a bedroom, and the General, stooping his head to avoid striking it against the top of the doorway, entered. The apartment, though small, was clean and more comfortably fitted up than from the external appearance of the house he had been led to expect. On a low truckle bed, in one corner of the room, lay the form of the dying girl; at a sign from her brother, General Grant approached, and seating himself on a chair by the bedside, waited till she should address him. For a few minutes she appeared quite unable to do so, and her visitor feared, as he gazed on her emaciated form and sunken features, that she had indeed delayed her communication till the paralysis of coming death had sealed her lips, never again to unclose in this life. In his earlier days General Grant had been familiar with death in some of its most appalling shapes; he had seen men fall by his side, mutilated by ghastly sabre wounds, to be trampled under the hoofs of maddened, plunging horses; he had stood immovable when the deadly artillery ploughed up the ground around him and mowed down whole ranks as the scythe of the reaper prostrates the nodding corn; and when the word of command had gone forth, he had led on the stern remnant that were left, till the bayonet avenged the losses they had sustained; and when the fight was won, he had sat by the couch of some wounded comrade, and watched the strong man battle as it were with death, and yield his last sigh in a fruitless struggle with the inexorable enemy. But he had never before seen any one worn to the brink of the grave by sorrow and disease, and despite his utmost efforts to the contrary, the sight shocked and distressed him deeply. The picturesque stage of decline had long since passed away, and in the appearance of his victim the destroyer stood revealed in his true colours. The features of the poor sufferer were characterised by an expression of fatigue and distress, that told of long days and weary nights of patient endurance; she was so emaciated that the form of the skull and the outline of the bones of the cheek and jaw were distinctly visible through the parchment-like skin, giving a strange, unearthly appearance to the face, while the parched lips, the dark fever spot burning in the centre of each cheek, and at intervals the low, husky cough, which once heard can never be mistaken, evinced only too surely the presence of that fell disease, which seems, as its peculiar attribute, to select its victims amongst the young and fair. Her whole appearance was so worn and corpse-like, that when, after a paroxysm of coughing, she raised her drooping eyelids and fixed her earnest, appealing glance upon her visitor, he started as though he had seen one raised from the dead by the agency of some special miracle.

"I thank God that you are come, sir," she said in a low, sweet voice, "that I may yet do some good before I die. I have been the cause of much evil in my short life, and I felt it was a duty to tell you the truth of my sad history, and do the little that is possible to save another from enduring the same misery that has brought me to the condition in which you see me." She paused, and the silent, inward cough—the voice of death—again shook her fragile frame. "You do not know me," she resumed; "I am Jane Hardy." As she mentioned her name the General started, and bending his head, drank in her every word with deep attention. "About three years ago," she continued, "or perhaps rather less, a gentleman who was staying at Broadhurst was thrown from his horse while hunting. He was stunned by the fall, and some of his companions brought him to our cottage. There was no one but myself at home, and I fetched water and bathed his temples. As soon as he began to revive, the friends who had brought him said laughingly that they could not leave him in better hands, and quitted us to follow the hunt. As the gentleman began to recover he entered into conversation with me. He was very witty and clever, and told me of the fine sights he had seen in foreign lands, and many other beautiful and wonderful things which I had never heard of, and before he went away he drew me to his side and kissed me, and said he should come again to see his kind little nurse, and I—God help me—I was young and simple, and I believed all he said, and from that hour I loved him. Well, sir, he came not only once, but often, and I listened to his soft words and specious promises until I ceased to think of or care for anything but him. I had no mother to warn me; my poor father had become stern and morose, and I feared him and sought only to conceal my attachment from him. With some of the facts you, sir, are already acquainted. My father was captured on one of his poaching expeditions and sent to gaol. I sat up the whole night waiting for his return, and in the early morning came, not he whom I was expecting, but my tempter. He told me what had occurred, revealed to me for the first time his real rank, promised to obtain my father's pardon by means of his wealth and influence, and, as the price of his assistance, implored me to fly with him. He could not make me his bride in England, he said; his position forbade it; but he vowed he would carry me to some bright land in the sunny south, and that we should be united and live happily there. Weak fool that I was! I believed him, and consented.

"The rest of the tale is soon told. I accompanied him to London; he was kind to me, and my dream continued. By his desire I followed him to Rome, under the care of his valet. For a time I was treated with every attention; servants obeyed me, luxuries surrounded me; but his promise of marriage he never fulfilled. Then he began to grow tired of me, and my punishment commenced. He soon proved to me the true nature of his disposition; his temper was fearful, at once passionate, sulky, and vindictive, and I was a safe object on which to vent it. Still I could have borne this uncomplainingly if I could have believed that he continued to love me. But his coldness and indifference became every hour more apparent, till at length I

awoke one morning to learn that he had deserted me. I discovered his direction and wrote to him. I forbore reproaches; I knew that I had lost his love—I knew, alas! too late, that he had never really loved me, and all I sought was to return to England, beg my father's forgiveness, and then, if it pleased God, to die. But I entreated him to send me money enough to take me home again. He left my letter unanswered for a week, and then enclosed me a cheque for five pounds, telling me that I had already cost him more than I was worth, and that I need expect nothing further at his hands."

"And the name of this diabolical scoundrel was——?" inquired General Grant eagerly.

"Lord Bellefield," was the reply, in a clear, distinct, though feeble tone of voice.

"What proof can you give me of this?" was the cautious rejoinder.

"These letters," returned the girl, producing a small packet from beneath her pillow.

The General took them, examined the post-marks and the seals, compared the signatures with that of a letter he took out of his pocket, read two or three of them and then returned them, muttering in a voice that trembled with suppressed rage, "They are genuine, and they are *his*."

"The rest of my tale is soon told," resumed Jane Hardy. "Lord Bellefield had left debts behind him, and when it was known he had quitted Rome, not meaning to return, those to whom he owed money seized the few valuables that I possessed (chiefly dresses and trinkets which *he* had given me), and my last hope, that of returning to England, was taken from me." Here a fit of coughing, prolonged till it seemed as though it must annihilate her feeble frame, effectually interrupted the speaker. Her brother held a strengthening cordial to her parched lips, and after a lapse of some minutes she was enabled to resume her narration, though her voice was so weak and husky that it was with difficulty her auditor could catch her words. "I have little more to tell," she said. "I suffered much, very much misery, but, thanks to the kindness of some sisters of charity (rightly were they so called), I was saved from the depths of degradation into which too many, deserted as I was, have been forced." Again she paused from weakness, and with the tenderness of a woman Miles Hardy wiped the cold dews of approaching death from her brow, and put back the rich masses of her (even yet) beautiful hair. The General was visibly affected.

"Can nothing be done to save her?" he said; "I will ascertain who are the most skilful physicians in Venice and send them to her. No money shall be spared."

A dark look flitted across Miles's face, but the dying girl turned towards the speaker, and a faint smile testified that she had heard and understood him.

"Tell me," she whispered, "that my last moments have not been spent in vain. Your daughter—they say she is good and beautiful; he will take her heart for the plaything of an hour and then crush it as he has crushed mine. You will not let her marry him?"

"Sooner would I see her stretched on her death-bed before me," was the stern rejoinder.

The girl smiled again. "You have made me *so* happy," she whispered; then with difficulty, and pausing between each word, she continued, "Tell him I forgive him and pray for him; I pray that he may repent." Again she paused, apparently struggling for breath: "Miles, it is very dark," she said; "come nearer, dear!" Her brother placed his arm round her, and nestling her head in his bosom, an expression of child-like happiness spread over her features. Having lain thus for some moments she suddenly started up, exclaiming aloud, "Oh God! my chest!" In a moment the severe pain seemed to pass away and the happy smile returned. "May He bless you, dearest!" she murmured; then a solemn change came over her countenance, there was a slight struggle, and then—the jaw relaxed, the eyes glazed, and she fell back in her brother's arms a corpse.

When later on that night women came to perform the last sad offices to the dead, an English Bible was found beneath the pillow, and a leaf was turned down at the text, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much;" words of mercy we should do well to bear in mind, and humbly trust they may indicate the future of many a "broken and contrite heart."

While General Grant was thus occupied, Annie, little dreaming of the various events that had occurred, and which so nearly concerned her happiness, was thinking over the scenes of the morning, and afflicting her spirit by the recollection of Lewis's parting words. What would she not give that he could know the truth; know *why* she had allowed herself to be engaged to a man whom Lewis had good reason to believe she both disliked and feared; but it was impossible, situated as she was, to enlighten him, and she must submit to bear that most bitter of all trials, the knowledge that one we love thinks evil of us, and has just and reasonable grounds for such misconception. Then her engagement to Lord Bellefield, now more hateful to her than ever—what should she do to avoid it? to whom should she turn for counsel and assistance?—Laura?—she had great faith in her good sense, and, above all, in her energy of character—could she, dare she, confide in her? and she had just settled that she certainly could *not* when a gentle tap was heard at the door. Annie cried, "Come in," and Laura entered.

"I hope I am not disturbing you, dear," she said, "but I grew fidgety about you, fearing the alarm and fatigue of the morning might have been too much for your strength."

Annie smiled mournfully and shook her head, at the same time making room for her friend on the settee upon which she was reclining. Laura placed herself by her side, and taking Annie's hand in her own, stroked it caressingly.

"Poor little hand," she said; "how soft and white it is, but it's getting sadly thin; really, dear Annie, I must lecture you. You eat nothing, and your spirits have quite deserted you—you who were such a happy, merry little thing—it makes me miserable to see you."



THE DEATH OF JANE HARDY.

She paused for a reply, and at length it came, but in a form she did not expect, and which tended not at all to remove her anxiety.

"Do you think I am very ill, Laura?" Annie asked; "so ill that I am at all likely to die?"

"No, darling; I hope—I trust not," returned Laura earnestly; "but why do you ask, and in so strange a tone that one could almost fancy you wished that it might be so?"

"Because I do wish it," was the sad rejoinder; "if I live I must be very unhappy—there is no help for it, and so I wish to die. Is that wrong? I am afraid it is."

Laura paused ere she replied—

"I don't think you are likely to die—grief kills very slowly. I am sure you need not die of grief, or seek to die to escape a life of unhappiness, if you would only be reasonable. I love you as I should have loved a sister, had I possessed one; my only desire is to render you happier; I am a woman, as yourself, and as little likely as you would be, were our situations reversed, to do or counsel anything which could wound your feelings or compromise your delicacy; and yet you lock your sorrow in your own breast, and refuse to give me sufficient insight into your heart to enable me to be of the slightest comfort or assistance to you. Is this wise or even kind?"

Such an appeal, coming at that particular moment, was irresistible. Annie threw her arms round her friend, hid her face on Laura's shoulder, and sinking her voice almost to a whisper, inquired—

"What is it you wish to know?"

"You dislike Lord Bellefield, and are anxious not to marry him?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" was the unmistakable answer.

"You love——"

Annie drew back, but Laura's arm, passed round her slender waist, detained her.

"You love Lewis Arundel?"

This time Annie did not reply, but a convulsive pressure of the hand answered Laura's question better than words could have done.

"Then, if you love him as he deserves to be loved, how could you allow yourself to be forced into an engagement with Lord Bellefield?"

"Must I, indeed, reveal to you all my folly and weakness?" murmured poor Annie.

"Really I am afraid you must, dear, if you wish my advice to be of the smallest use to you," returned Laura with a kind, encouraging smile; "but perhaps the follies may prove not to have been so very foolish, and the weaknesses turn out amiable ones after all. Come, let us hear!"

Thus urged, Annie recounted with smiles, and tears, and words, now dropping in broken sentences, now poured forth with all the eager vehemence with which feelings long restrained at length find vent, that portion of this veritable history which especially related to herself, and the rise and progress of her unfortunate attachment; until she reached the point whereat, overwhelmed by the belief that Lewis had departed from Broadhurst, suspecting her love and not reciprocating it, she had permitted herself to be hurried into an engagement with Lord Bellefield, sacrificing herself to guard against the possibility of

any imputation being cast upon her maidenly reserve. Here Laura interrupted her by exclaiming—

“My poor child! I see it all now; you are to be pitied, not blamed; would to Heaven you had known the truth earlier! how much misery it might have saved you. Lewis Arundel quitted Broadhurst because he loved you with all the impassioned tenderness of his fiery nature, and found even his iron will powerless to control or even longer to conceal his feelings.”

“How do you know this?” exclaimed Annie, sweeping back her luxuriant ringlets from her flushed cheeks, and fixing her large, eager eyes upon her friend’s countenance.

“From his own lips when he first heard that you were coming here,” was the reply. And Annie, pressing her hands to her eyes, hid her face in the sofa cushion and burst into tears; but this time they were tears of joy.

Then, when she had in some degree recovered from her agitation, Annie learned the history of Lewis’s wanderings to cure his love, and how signally the remedy had failed, and how he had turned painter, and was cleverer than anybody else (a fact of which she felt convinced before she heard it), and how Laura had discovered his secret through the medium of his sketch of Annie and Faust—(she did not mention the “Giaour” pictures, fearing to alarm her friend)—and how Charles and she had seen a great deal of him and become very fond of him (oh how Annie loved her for saying that!), and how at last one day she had gained his confidence and he had told her all, and how she had resolved never to breathe a syllable of it to Annie unless she could clear herself in the matter of accepting Lord Bellefield, and thus prove herself not unworthy to possess the knowledge that the priceless blessing of Lewis’s noble and generous heart was hers, and hers only. And when Laura had finished, Annie, like a true woman, contrived by a series of “cunning-simple” questions to make her tell her tale all over again, particularly those portions which related to Lewis’s nobleness of nature, and the depth, strength, and permanent quality of his affection for herself; and when all had been said and re-said that could by any possibility be found to say, even on this interesting matter, Annie fixed her soft, imploring eyes on her friend’s countenance, and asked in a tone of the most innocent but complete helplessness—

“And now, dear Laura, tell me what *is* to be done?”

Up to this moment Laura had considered the whole question to hinge on one point—was Annie worthy of the love of such a man as Lewis, or not? This satisfactorily decided, all other difficulties seemed by comparison insignificant; but now, when the monster obstacle had disappeared, the engagement to Lord Bellefield, the General’s obstinacy, Lewis’s pride, Annie’s womanly reserve, and Charley’s indolence and dislike of saying or doing anything which could by the most remote possibility irritate or annoy any one, all flashed across her and bewildered her. Still she had great faith in her own energy and in the goodness of her cause, and so replied vaguely, but confidently—

"Why, my love! it's perfectly absurd to give way to despair as you have been doing; of course something must, and therefore can and shall be done; but what it is to be will, I confess, require some little consideration!"

And just when their deliberations had reached this point, Laura received a summons from her husband to say that he desired to speak with her; so she imprinted a kiss on Annie's smooth brow, and they parted.

"I say, Laura, read this," exclaimed Charley, looking worried and perplexed, as he handed his wife the following note:—

"Dear Charles, I have desired your servant to give you this note in case I should not return in the course of the next two hours. I am about to accompany a young stranger, representing himself to be an English sailor, to visit his sister, who is said to be on her death-bed, and has some communication to make to me. I have examined the man, and believe his tale; but if I should not return within the time specified, it is probably a clever fabrication, and as no lie can be framed for other than an evil purpose you had better apply at once to the police, and look after me in whatever way they may advise.—Yours faithfully,
"ARCHIBALD GRANT."

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE FATE OF THE WOLF!

"PLEASANT that," resumed Charley, as Laura, having finished reading the note, returned it with looks of alarm. "Evans declares it's more than two hours since Governor Grant started, and there are no signs of him yet. Why people can't stay quietly at home when they've got a good house over their heads, instead of rushing out to seek dangerous adventures, I can't think. I should have supposed the General had arrived at a time of life when he would have sense enough not to be gulled by messages from girls, either living or dying. Perhaps the summons was meant for Bellefield after all, and the bearer delivered it to the wrong man; what a joke that would be, eh?"

"Really, Charles, I don't think it is anything to laugh at," returned Laura anxiously; "is your brother at home?"

"No, Belle's out too; my family is becoming shockingly dissipated."

"Had you not better apply to the police, as the note proposes?" urged Laura.

"Police, indeed!" muttered Charley: "the General can't remember that he is out of London. I wonder he did not direct me to send a cab for him. These confounded sulky Austrian officials are rather different customers to deal with from our blue-bottles—Messrs. A1 & Co. The only thing is to go down to the consul's office, and that must be done, I suppose, but it's an awful bore."

So saying, Charley yawned, stretched himself, made Laura ring for his boots, and had just accomplished the labour of pulling them on, when rapid footsteps were heard—doors opened and shut, and the

object of their anxiety stood before them, his face flushed with exercise, and his whole manner bearing traces of excitement and agitation.

"Well, General," began Charley, "we were just going to commence fishing for you in all the canals——" when his auditor interrupted him by inquiring in a quick, eager voice—

"Your brother is not in the house, is he?"

"No; he has been out all the evening, and is not yet returned," was the reply.

"Leave us, Laura, there's a good girl," exclaimed the General; "stay," he continued, as Laura was quitting the room, "do not say anything which can alarm Annie."

Laura nodded her acquiescence and departed.

"I am very anxious about your brother," resumed the General. "As I was returning from this most strange and painful interview, the young man who had summoned me still acting as my guide, some person followed us, and as we were crossing the Rialto approached, and tapping my companion on the shoulder, detained him. They conversed in Italian, but I made out enough of what they said to catch the following words spoken by the new-comer—

"'I have watched him the evening through. He went from——' (the names of the places I could not hear) 'to ——, which he has this moment quitted. Jacopo and the others are prepared; we only await your directions. Why have you not joined us sooner?'

"'It was impossible,' was the reply; 'but all will yet go as it should.'

"Then, turning to me, my guide continued, 'You have now only to walk straight on to reach the Square of St. Mark; no one will interrupt you. Farewell, sir; and remember *her* wishes.'

"This referred to his poor sister, about whom I will tell you another time. He and his companion then quitted me. Mechanically I walked forward, reflecting on the interview, which had harassed and distressed me greatly, till, recalling the words I had just overheard, a new idea struck me, and I turned and looked back; as I did so I perceived, at some distance off, a man carelessly advancing towards me—at the moment several others rushed out upon him; there was a short struggle, then, as it seemed to me, he was overpowered, a cloak was flung over his head, and he was hurried away. Instantly I ran to the spot, but it was some considerable distance from the place where I had been standing, and when I arrived there, no traces of them were visible. The whole affair from beginning to end was over in less than a minute, but from the glimpse I had, I feel convinced the man I saw carried off was your brother."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Charles, starting, "kidnap Bellefield! why, what possible motive could anybody have for doing that?"

"One only too powerful—revenge!" was the alarming reply. "My guide was young Hardy, whose sister Bellefield has cruelly betrayed and forsaken. Come, Charles, let us obtain aid to seek and save him: God grant we may not arrive too late."

We must now return to Lord Bellefield. After the disturbance at the Casino, his lordship, accompanied by Rastelli, repaired to a shooting-gallery, where he practised with pistols for an hour. Having by

repeated successes assured himself that his late fall had not shaken his nerves to a degree which could interfere with his skill as a duellist, he turned to his companion, observing, "Now, Rastelli, devise some method of killing time for the next hour or so; I am anxious not to return to the Palazzo Grassini till the family have retired for the night. I had rather avoid meeting any of them till this little affair is over. What can we contrive to do with ourselves?"

"Come home with me, and let us have a quiet game at *écarté*," was the reply; "that will amuse without exciting you. I wish you to keep cool, in order that you may punish for his temerity the insolent Luigi." As he spoke the dark eyes of the Italian flashed with the fire of revenge.

Lord Bellefield remarked his eagerness, and smiled contemptuously. "Calm yourself, my good Rastelli," he said, quietly lighting a cigar; "justice shall be done, depend on it."

"How cold and phlegmatic you English are!" exclaimed Rastelli, irritated at his companion's apparent apathy; "had the brigand insulted me as he has insulted you, if I had not stabbed him on the spot, I should have known no peace till he lay bleeding at my feet."

Lord Bellefield placed his hand on his friend's shoulder, and approaching his lips to his ear, said in a low, impressive voice, "Listen! we Englishmen do not talk about these things, we *do* them." There was a cold, grating bitterness in his tone, which told of such fiendish malice working at his heart that the Italian's display of boyish passion shrank into insignificance beside it.

Together they repaired to Rastelli's dwelling; cards were produced, and their game began. With the calculating prudence of an accomplished gamester, Lord Bellefield played cautiously and for moderate sums till he had tested his adversary's calibre; then, confident in his own skill, he artfully led on the young Italian to propose higher stakes, until, at the expiration of an hour and a half, he had won above a couple of hundred pounds.

"You are becoming excited and beginning to play wildly, *amico mio*," he said, pushing back his chair; "we will pause for to-night."

"And when will you give me my revenge?" inquired the Italian with flushed cheeks and trembling lips.

"When you like—to-morrow evening, if it so please you—always supposing our peep-of-day amusement goes as it should do," answered Lord Bellefield carelessly.

"And what if you should be hit?" questioned Rastelli with a grim smile, which involuntarily suggested to his auditor the idea that such a catastrophe would not deeply distress him.

"To provide against such a contingency I shall make my will to-night, and appoint you executor and residuary legatee; so that when you have satisfied the few claims against me, the remainder of my property will be yours, to compensate for this evening's run of ill-luck," was the jesting reply.

Rastelli, having by this time in a degree recovered his good

humour, answered in the same light tone; then having made their final arrangements for the morrow's meeting, they shook hands and parted.

As Lord Bellefield gained the street, the conventional smile faded from his lips, and a dark, sullen expression imparted a gloomy ferocity to his countenance. His look did not belie the nature of his thoughts, which ran somewhat after the following fashion:—

"A pretty thing I'm in for—to think of that accursed Arundel turning up in such an out-of-the-way place as this! my ill-luck follows me everywhere. That scoundrel is my evil genius. I shall be rid of him to-morrow though, for I'll shoot him like a dog; that's some comfort." He paused, then a new idea seemed to strike him, and he muttered, "Curse him, he means to murder me; I read it in his fiendish eyes. I wonder whether he is anything of a shot? A nice way to lose one's life, in a quarrel with a tutor! it's next door to going out with one's valet. Well, I'm in for it, and must chance it; a quick aim and a hair trigger may pick him off, as it has done many a better fellow, before he has time to be mischievous. I wonder whether Charles or old Grant know of his being here? If not, the thing can be easily hushed up." A sound as of a man's footstep caused him to start and look round, but seeing no one he resumed, "Assassination is said to be one of the fashions of this place; I wish I was a little more *au fait* as to the customs of the natives, or had longer time to act in. I might get my friend quietly disposed of without risk or trouble." He reflected a moment on the feasibility of such a scheme; but the spirit of revenge and hate was strong within him, and muttering a fearful curse, he added, "No! — him, I'd rather shoot him with my own hand; that blow sticks by me."

At this moment a man started out from a dark archway so suddenly as nearly to run against Lord Bellefield, who, drawing himself up indignantly, was about to commence an angry remonstrance, when his elbows were pinioned from behind, some person tripped up his heels, a cloak was flung over his head, and despite his attempts to free himself, he was overpowered and hurried away by a party of several men. After proceeding some short distance they reached the bank of a canal; here they paused, and still holding the cloak over the captive's head to prevent him from giving an alarm, they bound his hands. One who seemed to possess authority over the others superintended this operation in person.

"Not so tight," he said to an over-zealous individual who was tying the cord as though it were never to be unfastened, "not so tight, it will numb his arms. Now," he continued, "raise him carefully;" and in obedience to his command Lord Bellefield felt himself lifted from his feet and placed in a lying posture at the bottom of what he rightly imagined to be a gondola.

Having ascertained by listening that a portion of his captors were engaged in rowing the boat, Lord Bellefield made an effort to remove the cloak from his face, at the same time slightly raising himself; immediately a heavy hand pressed him down, and a deep, low voice uttered the following caution, "There is the point of a knife within

an inch of your heart; if you again attempt to move or speak I plunge it in!"

Thus warned, nothing remained but to lie still and await his captor's pleasure, which alternative, distracted by mingled rage and fear, Lord Bellefield was forced to adopt. From the time occupied by their transit it appeared that they must have proceeded some considerable distance ere the gondola again stopped. Carefully guarded as before, the prisoner was taken on shore, and half-led, half-carried over some uneven, stony ground, in traversing which his conductors were more than once forced to turn aside as if to avoid some obstacle that lay in their path; he was then told to ascend steps; doors were unbarred to afford them ingress, and the air struck cold and damp, as from a vault. At length, apparently, they reached their destination, and the prisoner was made to sit down on a stone bench; a light was procured, and then the order was given, "Untie his hands, remove the cloak, and leave us."

The persons spoken to obeyed, and in another moment Lord Bellefield was able to look round him. The chamber in which he found himself was small, the roof was high and vaulted, and the walls appeared of an immense thickness; the door was of oak, thickly studded with iron nail-heads; there was no fireplace; a ship's lantern, hanging by a cord from the roof, dimly lighted the apartment, and a grated window, sunk in the thickness of the wall, seemed to afford the only means of communication with the outward air. As Lord Bellefield became aware of these particulars the men who had released his hands and removed the cloak quitted the room, locking and barring the door on the outside; in another moment the sound of their retreating footsteps echoed along the stone passage and died away in the distance. A shudder passed over Lord Bellefield's frame as he found himself thus strangely left alone with one whose purpose he could scarcely imagine other than hostile. As his companion—who wore one of those half-masks termed a domino, which effectually concealed his features—did not seem inclined to address him, Lord Bellefield had time to examine, with a beating heart, the preparations made for his reception. The only article of furniture the apartment contained, with the exception of the stone bench on which he was seated, was a heavy oak table. At the end nearest him lay a cutlass, the blade crossed by that of a stiletto, in front of which was placed a loaded pistol. A similar arrangement of weapons garnished the other end of the table, at which stood the motionless figure of the stranger. The whole thing was so strange, and so like some fancy of a horrible dream, that it was with difficulty Lord Bellefield could believe the evidence of his senses. At length the silence became unendurable to such a degree that, even at the risk of hurrying on his fate, he resolved to break it. Addressing his captor, he asked, in a voice which trembled in spite of his efforts to appear cool and indifferent, "What place is this to which you have brought me?"

The person addressed paused a moment, and then, without removing his mask, replied, "A vault in the ruins of a convent on an island in the lagunes, a mile from Venice."

Up to this moment Lord Bellefield had been possessed with a secret belief that his captor was none other than Lewis Arundel; and having already had a convincing proof both of his enemy's bodily strength and of the implacable nature of his feelings towards him, the idea that he had kidnapped him and carried him off to this desolate place in order to force upon him a combat *à l'outrance*, with weapons in the use of which his skill as a duellist would avail him little, was by no means an agreeable one. This fear his companion's speech had dispelled, for the voice, though deep and stern, was not the voice of Lewis. Ignorant of the existence of any other person likely to nourish deep feelings of revenge against him, Lord Bellefield immediately conceived that he had fallen into the hands of some English ruffian connected with banditti, in which case their object would probably be plunder; and the solitary chamber, the naked weapons, etc., mere scenic arrangements got up for the sake of intimidating him, and so making a better bargain. Much relieved by this view of the affair, he began—

"Your object in bringing me here is of course plunder, all this absurd mummery is therefore utterly needless; you have only to name some reasonable sum for my ransom, and as I cannot get out of the scrape otherwise, I must pay it."

"You will find it no mummery, and are wrong in supposing money will be of the slightest avail to you," was the reply.

Lord Bellefield, however, still considering his idea a right one, and accounting for this speech as he had already accounted for the presence of the weapons—viz., as a means of intimidating him, in order to extort from his fears a higher ransom, continued—

"My good fellow, you have completely mistaken your man; all your tragedy nonsense is quite thrown away upon me. The affair is simply a matter of business: you require money, and knowing my rank, imagine me a Croesus. I am nothing of the kind, but I can make it well worth your while to set me free; conduct me safely to the Square of St. Mark, and I will give you a hundred Napoleons."

"A million curses on your money!" exclaimed the other furiously; "may the bitter malediction of a desperate man cleave to the rank and riches which have served to add a false splendour to as mean and pitiful a scoundrel as ever disgraced God's earth. Fool! let me undeceive you—I am Miles Hardy" (as he spoke he flung down his mask), "the brother of Jane—your victim—I have brought you here *to die*. Now do you think your money, that money which you refused to give to save her from a life of infamy, or a beggar's death, is likely to bribe me to change my purpose?"

For a moment Lord Bellefield was utterly confounded by this declaration; he had never been aware that Jane possessed a brother, and the surprise added to his discomfiture; besides, hardened as he was, he knew that he had deeply wronged the girl, and a superstitious instinct of the justice of the retribution which had overtaken him helped still more effectually to terrify and crush him: for once both his haughty spirit and his presence of mind failed him, and mistaking the character of the man with whom he had to deal, he resolved first if possible to deceive, then to cajole and bribe him.

"Refuse money to Jane Hardy!" he began in a tone of feigned surprise; "you must have strangely deceived yourself: while she remained with me I lavished hundreds upon her, and when, with the caprice of her sex, she chose to leave me for some more favoured swain, as I imagine, ignorance of her abode alone prevented my settling a liberal allowance upon her. Even now I am ready to do so if she wishes it—where is she?"

A look of contemptuous anger, which had overspread Miles Hardy's face as Lord Bellefield uttered these falsehoods, gave place to an expression of deep solemnity as he replied, "She is where you will be ere another hour has passed, wretched liar that you are—gone to answer for her sins before her God!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Lord Bellefield, involuntarily shocked into an expression of feeling. Miles regarded him attentively; had he discerned in him any symptoms of real grief for her loss, any signs of true penitence for the destruction he had wrought, there was that working in the brother's heart which might even yet have saved him. But a doom was upon the seducer, and a fresh display of his evil, sordid nature hastened it. "Poor girl!" he said; "upon my word, Hardy, I'm quite shocked at this sudden intelligence; I really was excessively fond of her at one time—a—I mean to say, before she chose to run away from me. However, you must not take the affair so deeply to heart: I can assure you these things are happening every day, and I always meant to make her a liberal settlement; but as that is now unfortunately impossible, we must see what can be done for you." Having delivered himself of this heartless speech, which he considered a model of diplomacy, Lord Bellefield paused to observe its effects upon his auditor. Miles stood for a moment as if absorbed in grief, murmuring to himself, "My poor Jane, and was it for such a thing as this you sacrificed your young life? My poor, poor sister!" Then suddenly raising his head, he said, with a glance of the most withering scorn—

"Your mean lies will prove of as little use to you as your money; I loathe it, them, and you alike. I have told you I brought you here to die, and I have told you true; but I am no assassin, and if you have the courage of a man, you have one chance yet remaining. On that table lie six weapons, three for you and three for me; choose which you will, and come on; only if the first fails we must try the second, and if that does not end the matter there still remains the third. Come, make your choice."

"Well, but hear me——" began Lord Bellefield, turning very pale.

"Not a word," was the angry answer, "instantly defend yourself. If you refuse, I will shoot you where you stand;" so saying he advanced a step towards the table.

Lord Bellefield, who had risen during the last speech, slowly followed his example, casting, as he did so, a scrutinising look round the apartment, and especially towards the window; the action did not escape Hardy's quick sight.

"Your search is useless," he said, smiling contemptuously. "Were you here alone, with proper tools at hand, and knowing how to use

them to the best advantage, it would take you two hours to break out of this place. If you call ever so loudly, there is no one to hear you—my companions are half-way back to Venice by this time. You have nothing left but to overcome me, or to die the dog's death you deserve."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Lord Bellefield eagerly; "my friends have succeeded in tracing me, and even now I hear the tread of soldiers in the passage—hark!"

With a gesture of surprise Hardy turned towards the door. This was all Lord Bellefield required. Springing forward, he seized the pistol nearest to him, levelled it, and with the speed of thought, fired. Looking round, Hardy perceived too late the snare that had been laid for him. As he did so, a sharp, stinging pain, followed by a sensation like the burn of a red-hot iron, passed round his left side. The ball, aimed at his heart, had struck against the handle of a clasp-knife which, sailor-fashion, he wore slung round his neck by a string, and glancing off, entered the side and passed round one of the ribs under the skin, lodging among the muscular fibres of the shoulder-blade. Furious at the cowardly stratagem to which he had so nearly fallen a victim, and half-maddened with the pain of his wound, Hardy seized the other pistol, and shouting, "Die, you infernal, treacherous scoundrel!" snapped it at his adversary; but owing to the priming being damp, the pistol rusty, or from some other unexplained cause, the cap exploded without discharging the weapon. Flinging it down with an oath, he snatched up the sword that lay nearest to him, and exclaiming, "Come on, and be —— to you!" scarcely gave his antagonist time to follow his example, ere he attacked him furiously.

For a minute or two cut and thrust followed each other so rapidly that all seemed confusion. Then as their first fury became expended, and they fought more cautiously, Lord Bellefield perceived, to his extreme satisfaction, that he was the better swordsman of the two, Hardy having merely picked up the use of the cutlass on board a man-o'-war, while his antagonist had learned fencing amongst the other military exercises of a cavalry regiment in which, till within the last two or three years, he had held a commission. If, therefore, he could contrive to defend himself till Hardy's fury should have in some degree worn out his strength, he trusted either to disarm his adversary, or by a well-directed thrust to rid himself of him for ever. Nor was he disappointed in this expectation; for having with some difficulty parried a furious thrust, he caught Hardy's sword with the blade of his own weapon, and by a sudden turn of the wrist sent it flying out of his hand, leaving his enemy defenceless and at his mercy. But mercy being a quality for which his lordship was never famous, more especially when, as in the present instance, its exercise might compromise his own safety, he drew back a step to get room for his thrust, with the intention of running his opponent through the body. With the speed of lightning, Hardy perceived the only chance remaining for him, and unhesitatingly adopted it. Snatching up one of the stiletos, he rushed upon Lord Bellefield, and receiving his thrust through the fleshy part of his left arm, closed with him and buried the dagger in his heart. Uttering a sound between a gasping sob and a groan, the



THE FATE OF THE WOLF.

young nobleman staggered, raised his arm as if in the act to strike, and fell back a corpse.

Thus did the vengeance of the great God whom he had insulted by a life of selfish crime overtake this wicked man in the pride of his youth and strength, and thus in the same night were the libertine and his victim called to appear before the Judge of all the earth to answer for their deeds, whether they had done good, or whether they had done evil. For the humble penitent we may indeed sorrow, yet not as without hope; but for the impenitent sinner, cut off in the midst of crime, dying with his selfish heart untouched, his evil nature unregenerated, "there remaineth no longer any hope, but a fearful looking-for of judgment to come."

CHAPTER LXV.

FAUST PAYS A MORNING VISIT.

FRERE, on the principle of striking whilst the iron is hot, had no sooner obtained Lewis's promise to place in his hands the arrangement of the quarrel between Lord Bellefield and himself than he induced his friend to write a carefully worded apology for having in the heat of passion assaulted his lordship on the previous evening. Lewis took the pen, and without a murmur wrote as Frere dictated, his compressed lips and knitted brow alone telling of the martyrdom his proud spirit was undergoing; but his strength of will was as powerful for good as for evil; he had resolved on the sacrifice, and cost what it might, he *would* make it.

"And now, what is your intention?" he inquired, as Frere, having signified his approbation of its contents, folded the note and deposited it safely in his pocket-book. "Suppose Bellefield should refuse to accept this apology?"

"Never fear," was the confident reply, "he *must* accept it; and to tell you the truth, although he may bluster and give himself airs when he perceives you are not forthcoming, I expect he will only be too glad to be quit of such an awkward customer. I don't wish to be personal, but depend upon it you are by no means pleasant as an enemy; there is 'a lurking devil in your eye,' as Byron says (and he ought to know about devils, for, adopting the fallen angel hypothesis, he was very like one himself), that would try a man's nerve rather when he found himself standing opposite your loaded pistol at eighteen paces."

Lewis smiled faintly.

"The devil has been pretty well taken out of me this time," he said; "henceforth I shall be essentially a man of peace."

He paused, pressed his hand to his brow, and a slight shiver passed through his frame. Frere regarded him anxiously.

"What are you shivering about?" he inquired. "You don't feel ill, do you?"

"No, it is nothing," was the reply. "I have, as you may easily imagine, gone through a good deal, both mentally and bodily, of late,

and I am a little overworn; but a couple of hours' sleep will set me right again."

"Then the sooner you take it the better," rejoined Frere. "Never mind me; I shall ensconce myself in this arm-chair till the man of war, your second, makes his appearance, and sleep or read as the Fates may incline. What time do you expect your accomplice?"

"He will be here at half-past four," was the reply.

"And it is now just two; so turn in, and pleasant dreams to you."

Thus saying, Frere threw himself back in the chair, and drawing a volume of Dante out of his pocket, set to work to polish up his Italian, as he termed it. Lewis rose to follow his friend's advice, but a mist seemed to swim before his eyes, his brain reeled, his trembling knees refused to support him, and staggering forward he sank heavily to the ground in a fainting fit. Frere, much alarmed, raised him in his arms, and carrying him with some difficulty into the inner room, laid him on his bed, and began, with more energy than skill, to apply every conceivable or inconceivable remedy to recover him, but with only partial success, for although after the lapse of a few moments colour returned to his lips and pulsation to his heart, he neither spoke nor appeared to recognise his friend's voice, and after a few inarticulate murmurs sank into a dull, heavy sleep. Frere covered him with the bedclothes as well as he was able, then drawing a chair to the bedside, seated himself thereupon to watch his slumbers. Half-past four arrived, and with it Major Ehrenburg, the Austrian officer who had promised to act as Lewis's second. Before he came a new idea had entered Frere's head—it might not be necessary to make use of the apology at all, Lewis's sudden illness would be a sufficient reason for his not meeting his adversary.

"The amusement you have promised yourself in seeing my friend shoot or be shot you will be disappointed of, *Mein lieber Herr*," he said with a quiet smile, as the Austrian stared at him in surprise and twisted his moustaches fiercely. "Lord Bellefield in his angry moods is no doubt a very terrible fellow, but Lewis is about to wrestle with a more deadly foe yet, or I am much mistaken."

"Excuse me, sir, I have no time for badinage," returned the other, bowing with haughty politeness; "*nothing* can prevent this duel. I must speak with the Signore Luigi himself immediately. Permit me to pass."

"Oh, certainly," replied Frere, holding open the door of the bedroom; "but in regard to nothing being able to prevent the duel, 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' You will find my words to be true. See, his adversary has laid him on his back already."

The young soldier advanced to the bedside; Lewis still slept, but his slumbers were disturbed and feverish. As the other bent over him he turned uneasily and murmured some inarticulate sounds. Laying his hand on his shoulder, Ehrenburg attempted to rouse him.

"Luigi," he said, "it is late; they will be on the ground before us."

The only reply was again an inarticulate murmur; but on his repeating his summons Lewis sat up and stared about him with a

look of dull unconsciousness, then a wild light came into his eyes, and glaring furiously at the Austrian, he exclaimed in a hoarse voice—

“Villain, it is false! she loves you not—she never loved you!”

“Do you not know me Luigi?” inquired Ehrenburg in a more soothing tone of voice.

“Know you, scoundrel, yes! On earth, or in the lowest hell, I should know and hate you.” He paused, glanced wildly round the room, then exclaimed in a voice scarcely audible through passion, “What! here in my own house do you come to triumph over and to insult me? This is too much.” And with a scream of fury he made a spring at the other’s throat, which he would have succeeded in grasping, probably to his severe injury, had not Frere, who had watched him closely during the foregoing scene, thrown himself upon him, and with the assistance of the young soldier, who at length began to perceive the true state of the case, contrived to hold him down, till, exhausted by the violence of his struggles, he ceased to resist any longer.

“He must have exposed himself to malaria, and the fever has attacked the brain—is it not so?” inquired Ehrenburg as soon as he had recovered breath enough to speak.

“So I fear,” was the reply. “Malaria, or macaroni, or some horrid foreign thing or other, has brought on a violent fever, and, as you see, he is now about as mad as a March hare (though perhaps a belief in that popular zoological delusion may not extend to the Austrian dominions)—this last remark was made *sotto voce*. “And now, Mein Herr, the sooner you’re off the better, for Lord Bellefield, unless he is much belied, is not particularly famous for patience. You’ll explain to him why Lewis can’t do himself the pleasure of shooting him this morning; and you may add, with my compliments—Richard Frere’s, at your service—that it’s better luck than he deserves. By the way,” he continued, “if you could give one a hint how to come by such an article as a doctor I should esteem it an additional favour.”

“I will call at the residence of an English physician as soon as I leave this house,” was the reply; “fortunately, one who is reckoned very skilful resides within a few doors.”

“That’s right,” returned Frere, “none of your foreign quacks for me. Doctors are bad enough all the world over, I dare say; but an English one is a degree better than any of your homœopathic, mesmeric, electro-biologic, clairvoyant humbugs—*Al piacer di revedervi, Signore*; I mean, *Leben sie wohl, mein Herr*. A mustachioed, laced, and padded young puppy!” he continued, as, with a haughty bow and a puzzled expression of countenance, the young Austrian quitted the apartment; “can’t he be content with cutting throats himself without encouraging his neighbours to go and shoot at one another! I hate a fellow who will be second in a duel as I hate a professional hangman. I’d half a mind to let poor Lewis strangle him—a foreigner more or less is no great matter.”

The physician’s opinion coincided with that of Richard Frere. Overwrought both in mind and body, Lewis had been attacked by a

fever of the most virulent nature, and every resource that the science of medicine afforded appeared powerless to subdue it. Night and day Richard Frere sat by the sick man's bedside, listening with an aching heart to his fevered ravings. Now, for the first time, did he become aware of the depth and strength of that passion which, having destroyed its victim's peace of mind, seemed about to finish its work of devastation by sapping the very springs of life itself. In his delirium the idea appeared to have fixed itself in Lewis's imagination that the duel had taken place, and that Lord Bellefield had perished by his hand; and the agonised self-reproaches which his remorse forced from him were painful to listen to. Occasionally he would appear to forget even this, and imagining himself in the presence of her he loved, would breathe forth expressions of the deepest tenderness, when suddenly the recollection of his supposed guilt would flash across him, and upbraiding himself in the bitterest terms, he would exclaim that a bar existed between them, and declare himself a murderer accursed before God and man. And so the weary days wore on, and the sufferer grew paler and weaker, while still the fire which was consuming his young life burned fiercely as at first.

The day following the night of Lord Bellefield's death was a remarkable one, for it witnessed the assassination of the unfortunate Marinovitch, whose courage and strong sense of duty forbade him to desert his post, even in order to preserve his life; this act of dastardly revenge heralded the revolt in Venice. The Palazzo Grassini was, as may be supposed, the scene of much alarm and anxiety. General Grant and Leicester had been foiled in their attempt to trace the after proceedings of the party who had kidnapped Lord Bellefield, nor was any light thrown upon his mysterious disappearance until another night and day had elapsed, when, in consequence of a high reward offered by the family to any person who could afford information in regard to the affair, an individual in the garb of a gondolier sought an interview with General Grant. This worthy (who was none other than Jacopo, the bravo whose stiletto had so nearly proved fatal to Lewis) having bargained for the promised reward and for a free pardon for his own share in the transaction, confessed that he and certain of his associates had been engaged by an Englishman named Hardy, with whom he had been for some months acquainted, to seize and carry off a gentleman, against whom Hardy, for some reason, appeared to nourish a deep revenge; that this gentleman had been staying at the Palazzo Grassini; and that Hardy having pointed him out to him, he (Jacopo) had watched him the whole evening, and finding he remained abroad so late, had arranged to waylay him as he returned home, and succeeded in his design, though the plan was nearly being frustrated by the unexpected absence of Hardy, who however joined them at the last moment. He then communicated those details of the enterprise with which the reader is already acquainted, up to the time when he left Hardy and Lord Bellefield together in the ruined convent, beyond which he either was, or affected to be, ignorant in regard to the affair. The clue thus gained was, however, sufficient. Led by Jacopo to the room in which the duel had taken place, the General and Leicester

soon found their worst fears realised. The body lay covered with a cloak, on which was pinned a paper, written by Hardy before the duel, stating his intention of forcing Lord Bellefield to a mortal combat, adding that when that paper was found either one or both of them would have gone to their long account; at the bottom was scrawled in pencil—

“I have kept my word; he brought his fate upon his own head—no one had any hand in his death but myself; he fell in fair fight, having wounded me severely, but, as I think, not mortally.—(Signed) MILES HARDY.”

All Leicester's early affection for his brother was brought back by his dreadful fate, and he wept over his corpse like a woman. The General shuddered slightly when his eye first perceived the expression of rage and hatred stereotyped on the rigid features of the dead man's face, then his brow contracted and his mouth grew stern as he turned to issue directions for the murderer's apprehension. Whether, being Italians, the police looked upon manslaughter with a favouring eye, or whether the disturbed state of the city facilitated his escape, certain it is that Miles Hardy contrived to evade the search made for him; and after offering large rewards for his apprehension, and using every other means in his power to stimulate the exertions of the police, General Grant was fain to rest satisfied that he had done all which the strictest sense of duty could command at his hands. Perhaps, as the memory of the scene he had witnessed by Jane Hardy's death-bed recurred to him, and he thought of the cruel provocation her brother had received, even the stern old soldier might be glad that he had not been called upon to condemn Miles to an ignominious and painful death.

The feelings both of Laura and Annie, when they became acquainted with this frightful catastrophe, may easily be imagined. From Laura it was impossible to conceal it, for, unused to deep emotion of any kind, her husband's grief was for the time so overpowering that he completely lost all self-control, and it was only by the judicious exercise of her good sense and tenderness that she was enabled to restore him to anything like composure. Nor had she a much easier task with Annie, for a superstitious but not unnatural fancy seized her that (her earnest desire to avoid a union with Lord Bellefield having been thus fearfully accomplished) she was in some degree morally guilty. But Laura, tender, kind, judicious Laura, with her man's head and her woman's heart (a rare alliance, constituting human perfection), argued and soothed and coaxed and reasoned, until Annie's self-upbraiding horror yielded to her gentle persuadings, as did of old the demon which tormented Saul to the melody of David's harp: and indeed there is on earth no music sweeter than a loving woman's voice.

During all this time poor Walter found himself sadly neglected. After the affair at the Casino, Mr. Spooner, ignorant of Lewis Arundel's illness, and fearful that he would keep his word and inform General Grant of the shameful manner in which he had betrayed his trust, found some plausible excuse for resigning his situation and returning to England, at the General's expense, before any exposure should take

place. So he wrote himself a letter announcing the death of his mother (at that moment drinking brandy and water in the bar of a hotel in Birmingham, whereof she was landlady), and leaving three orphan sisters (invented for the occasion) solely dependent on him for *everything*; which epistle answered his purpose nicely. After his departure Walter was left pretty much to his own devices; and one of his chief amusements was drilling and talking to Faust, for whom all his old fondness had revived since the interview in which he had made up his quarrel with Annie. He was therefore especially annoyed and perplexed by a habit which the dog had lately acquired of absenting himself every day for several hours. Various were the schemes Walter laid to discover what became of the animal, but by some fatality they all failed to effect their object; and the cause of the dog's absence, as well as the mode in which he contrived to effect his egress, still remained a mystery. At length, one evening, as Walter was sitting at a window of the Grassini palace which looked into a small courtyard or garden enclosed by a high wall, his attention was attracted by observing something which in the short glimpse he had of it appeared like an animal's head pop up above the wall and disappear again. Watching the spot carefully, Walter soon witnessed a repetition of the phenomenon; but this time a rough, hairy body and legs followed the head, and after a slight scramble the delinquent Faust himself made his appearance at the top of the wall, which was sufficiently broad to afford him a precarious footing: he then deliberately, but with great caution, walked along the narrow causeway thus afforded, until he reached a spot where the limb of an old tree grew so as nearly to touch the wall; upon this he got, and contrived, by a mode of progression half-slipping, half-clambering, to arrive at a point whence he could easily jump to the ground. All these manœuvres Walter carefully noted, and formed his plan accordingly. The boy's curiosity—(we continue to use the term boy, for although in age and appearance poor Walter was now almost a man, in mind he was still far younger than his years, in spite of those occasional flashes of intelligence so often to be observed in cases of partial mental imbecility, which render a just estimate of the individual capacity so difficult to arrive at)—Walter's curiosity was thoroughly aroused by this discovery, and he determined if possible to find out the nature and object of Faust's clandestine expeditions. That he had some definite object Walter never for a moment doubted, for he had so completely made a friend and companion of the dog, that he had learned to look upon him much more as a reasonable being than as an animal guided only by an enlightened instinct.

For the rest of that day, and from an early hour on the following morning, Walter never lost sight of the dog, though he contrived to effect his purpose without interfering with its liberty of action. At length his patience was rewarded by seeing Faust enter the garden and begin to scramble up the identical tree, by means of which he had effected his descent on the previous day. Seizing his hat, Walter lost no time in following him; the tree was easy to climb, and the same branch which had afforded a passage for Faust enabled Walter to reach

the top of the wall in safety. On the other side the difficulties were still less, for the ruins of some ancient building lay scattered in all directions, and a pile of them actually came within a few feet of the top of the wall, forming a rough but efficient flight of steps. By the time Walter regained *terra firma*, however, Faust had proceeded some distance, and had he chosen to run on might still have preserved his secret inviolate. But when Walter called him, he stopped and waited till his friend approached, though neither threats nor endearments could prevail upon him to turn back, or to allow Walter to come near enough to lay hold of him. And so the pair proceeded, Faust running on for a short distance, waiting till Walter drew near, and then resuming his course. The route the dog pursued avoided the more frequented ways, and Walter began to think Faust was merely taking a stroll for the benefit of his constitution, when the animal suddenly turned down an archway, and looking back to see that his friend followed, proceeded along a narrow alley which led into one of the smaller streets, and stopped at the door of a house which projected beyond some of the others. The door stood ajar, and Faust without ceremony pushed it further open and walked in. Walter paused, debating as well as his mental capacity enabled him to do, whether or not he should venture to follow. It was a knotty point to decide. On the one hand his fears urged him to turn back and not risk facing the possible dangers which might lie hidden within this mysterious mansion; curiosity, on the other hand, prompted him to enter and discover at once and for ever the aim and end of Faust's incomprehensible visits. Fear was very near gaining the day, when, in thinking over every motive, probable or improbable, which might influence the dog, the bright idea flashed across him that perhaps Faust had discovered his former master, and the hope of again meeting his "dear Mr. Arundel" outweighing every other consideration, he boldly opened the door, and encountering Faust, who had returned to look for him, followed that sagacious quadruped up a flight of stairs.

Now it so happened that the particular morning in question was that of the fourteenth day from the commencement of Lewis's illness, and the physician had pronounced the crisis of the disease to be at hand. He had seen his patient late on the previous evening, and administered to him a powerful narcotic, from the effect of which he had not recovered when Walter and Faust commenced their ramble. Frere, who had sat up with him all night, had gone out to refresh himself with a short walk, leaving Lewis under the care of Antonelli, his old attendant. This worthy man had in his turn been called down to see a friend, who having heard of the Signore Luigi's illness, had come to prescribe some outrageous remedy, in the infallibility whereof his faith was as unshakable as his ignorance on all medical subjects was profound. Antonelli, whose grief at his patron's danger had been overpowering, was easily interested in his friend's account of the wonderful specific; and with the garrulity of age, he remained discussing its merits for a much longer space of time than he was at all aware of. Thus it came about that Walter, when he had followed Faust upstairs, and after a second fit of hesitation entered an apartment through the

partially open door of which the dog had disappeared, found himself in a room, in one corner of which stood a small iron bedstead whereon lay some person, who from his deep, regular breathing seemed to be in a sound sleep. Cautiously, and with noiseless footsteps, the boy approached and gazed upon the sleeper, nor, for a moment, could he recognise, in the pale, worn face which met his view, the features of his "dear Mr. Arundel." But this doubt was speedily resolved when Lewis moved uneasily in his sleep and muttered some indistinct words, amongst which Walter caught the name of Annie. Two clear ideas now presented themselves to the boy's mind: his friend was asleep and must not be roused, and from the expression of his features he must be either ill or unhappy. Having arrived at these conclusions, he proceeded to act upon them by seating himself at the bedside, to wait patiently till Lewis should awake, while he devoted all the powers of his intellect to form some theory by which to account for the change in his late tutor's appearance. As he thus sat anxiously watching, Lewis again turned restlessly, murmuring something, the meaning of which Walter could not catch, then speaking more distinctly, he said—

"She leaned upon his arm; she smiled on him; she loves him! I saw it with my own eyes."

He said this so plainly, that Walter, fancying he must be awake, addressed him, and asked if he were ill. Lewis caught the sound of the words, and replied—

"Ill in mind, Frere, nothing more."

Walter, still believing him to be awake, continued—

"It is I—Walter; do you not know me?"

For a moment the sleeping man made no reply, then resuming the conversation which he imagined himself holding with Frere, he exclaimed eagerly—

"Love one man and engage herself to another! I tell you no! Annie Grant never loved me!"

At this moment Faust (who had been lying quietly, and as if he were quite at home, on a rug by the bedside), roused by the sound of his master's voice, placed his fore-paws on the bed, and finding himself unnoticed, endeavoured to attract attention by licking first the sick man's hand and then his face. The effect of the opiate had by this time in a great measure worn off, and roused by Faust's intrusive affection, Lewis awoke with a violent start, and attempting to raise himself in a sitting posture, gazed around him in surprise, then fell back upon his pillow from weakness. After lying some moments perfectly motionless, he again unclosed his eyes and asked in a low, faint voice, "Am I dreaming still, or did I see Walter?"

"No, you are awake now, dear Mr. Arundel; it is I, Walter. Faust found you out, and brought me to see you."

As Walter mentioned Faust, Lewis for the first time perceived his old favourite, and stretched out his hand with the intention of patting him, but the effort was beyond his strength, and his arm sank powerless by his side. Faust, however, perceived the attention, and acknowledged it by again licking his hand. Lewis turned his languid

eyes from Walter to the dog, and a tear stole down his wasted cheek, then his lips grew compressed, and an expression of anguish overspread his countenance. With consciousness had also returned bitter memories. In the meanwhile Walter, delighted at recovering his long-lost friend, grew loquacious in the fulness of his joy, and ran on in his usual disconnected manner.

"So you haven't forgotten Faust, then, Mr. Arundel? He has never forgotten you either, poor fellow! all the time you have been away; but I have taken great care of him, you see; he's nice and fat, isn't he? We've been very good friends too, only we used to quarrel sometimes when he would follow Annie, and I did not like it because—because—" Here he paused, having a kind of confused recollection that this was a subject on which he wanted to say something particular. After waiting for a minute or two his ideas grew in a degree clearer, and he continued—

"You know I took a dislike to poor Annie, because I thought she made you go away. I always thought so until she told me it was not the case, and how fond she was of you."

When Walter first mentioned Annie's name Lewis started and made a gesture to induce him to be silent, but the boy did not understand his wishes, and his auditor soon became too much absorbed in the interest of his disclosures to seek again to interrupt him.

"You were talking about Annie just now, you know, before you were quite awake," resumed Walter, "and you said she did not love you. I remember I thought so too once, and that that was the reason why you went away, and so I took a dislike to her, and would not let Faust follow her, only he would. But we were both quite wrong, for Annie is just as fond of you as Faust and I are, and now I'll tell you how I came to find it out." He then in his rambling way gave a childish but perfectly intelligible account of his conversation with Annie Grant, with which the reader is already acquainted. Just as he had finished his recital, Richard Frere returned from his walk in time to overhear the last few words of the history, and to discover that Lewis had fainted from intense emotion.

CHAPTER LXVI.

URSA MAJOR SHOWS HIS TEETH.

WALTER'S visit to Lewis produced a more favourable effect upon the patient's health than did all the pills and potions wherewith his doctor had sought to exorcise the fever-fiend. He had *not* then deceived himself—Annie *had* loved him; nay, from Walter's recital, as well as from her manner on the occasion of his protecting her through the crowd in the square of St. Mark, was he not justified in believing that she loved him still? The idea was in itself happiness, for although the fact of her renewing her engagement with Lord Bellefield so immediately after Lewis had quitted Broadhurst still remained unaccounted for, the belief that she loved him seemed to impart a new

aspect to the whole affair, and for the first time he allowed himself to hope that her conduct might admit of some satisfactory explanation. The emotions of a mind so impulsive as Lewis's necessarily produce marked effects upon the body; agitation of spirits had mainly conduced to bring on the fever which had thus prostrated him, and the hope to which Walter's words had given rise seemed to infuse new life into him; at all events, it is certain that from the moment in which he became convinced that Annie had loved him he began to amend. As soon as Frere considered him strong enough to bear such an announcement, he informed him of the appalling fate which had overtaken his enemy. Lewis was at first strongly affected. But for events over which he had had no control he might now have been in the position of Miles Hardy, a wanderer on the face of the earth, bearing with him the harrowing consciousness that the blood of a fellow-creature was upon his hands. After remaining in silent thought for some minutes he suddenly raised his eyes to his friend's countenance.

"Frere," he said, "how can I ever be sufficiently grateful to God, who chose you as His instrument to set my sin before me, and bring me to a better frame of mind! Had this dreadful fate overtaken Bellefield without my having resolved not to fight him, I should have felt morally guilty of his death, considering that it was mere accident which had enabled Hardy to meet him sooner than myself."

"You acted rightly, under circumstances which I must confess to have afforded about as severe a trial to a man of your impetuous nature as could well be conceived," returned Frere; "so it is but fair that you should reap some advantage from your self-conquest. I pity poor young Hardy more than I blame him, for he has probably never been taught the truths of Christianity, and nothing else could have possessed sufficient power over him to induce him to forego his revenge. Ah! if such men as Bellefield could but be made to see the mental agony their vices cause to others, even their selfish hearts would be touched, and they would be unable to go on sinning with such callous indifference; but in their selfishness they look merely to the gratification of their own passions, and ignore all possible results which might tend to interfere with them. Such a career as Bellefield's is a fearful and inexplicable mystery to reflect upon, and it is only by a high exercise of faith that we can believe even Omnipotence able to bring good out of such consistent and unmitigated wickedness."

"And *is* such your belief?" inquired Lewis earnestly.

"Most assuredly it is," was the reply. "I am not one of those who acknowledge God's attributes with my tongue but in my heart practically deny; nor can I believe that a Being, the perfection of wisdom, of justice, and of mercy, could allow evil to exist, were He not able to overrule it to good. But if you ask me, 'How can these things be?' I tell you at once I do not know; I form no theory on the subject, for I have no power to do so; my mind is that of a weak, fallen man, and the secret things of God are so immeasurably above it that to speculate upon them is equally presumptuous and absurd. Still I feel as certain of the main fact as if each special detail of the Divine scheme lay

spread out like a map before me, because, were it not so, God would falsify His attributes; the great Being we worship would be, not a merciful Father, but a stern, inexorable judge. Depend upon it, Lewis, the real fallacy in the religious teaching of the present day is that, practically if not theoretically, fear rather than love is inculcated as the actuating principle, and, as a natural consequence, men ignore and put aside thoughts of futurity as they put aside any other painful and alarming reflection."

As Frere concluded Lewis paused in thought, then observed—

"All you have said sounds wise and true, and yet there appears a contradiction somewhere. Evil must always be hateful to God, and as such must deserve everlasting punishment. I cannot understand it."

"Nor do I wish or expect you to do so," replied Frere; "but cannot you wait patiently through a little space—the life of one man—trusting that when this mortal shall have put on immortality our enlarged faculties may enable us to see clearly that which we now believe as a matter of faith? The only difficulty arises from your attempting to measure things infinite with your finite intelligence; for instance, you talk of everlasting punishment—what do you mean by the term?"

"Mean, why, of course, punishment that shall endure throughout eternity," replied Lewis.

"And eternity, which to be eternal can no more have had a beginning than it shall have an end, is an idea our minds cannot grasp; and in attempting to define and realise these things we only confuse and mislead ourselves. Take my word for it, Lewis, true religion, the religion Christ came down from heaven to teach men, consists in a sincere, earnest, and consistent belief in the goodness and benevolence of the Creator, carried out practically by an unceasing endeavour to reform our fallen natures after His image."

"And how are we to gain the knowledge and the strength requisite to enable us to do this?" asked Lewis.

"By studying God's written word with an honest intention of doing as we are there told to do, at the same time imploring His assistance to enable us to carry out our good intentions," was the earnest reply.

So the conversation ended; but Lewis thought over the ideas thus presented to him, which, though not entirely new to him, or indeed to any other reflecting mind, had perhaps never before occurred in a light so clear and practical as that in which Frere had placed them; and as by slow degrees his strength began to return, and with Antonelli's assistance he contrived to creep for an hour at a time to his painting-room, he arose from that couch of sickness a wiser and a better man.

As soon as Charles Leicester had recovered from the first shock of his brother's death he determined to entrust his wife and child to the care of General Grant, while he started for England to break the distressing intelligence to his father. Lord Ashford was now becoming an old man, and although the profligate career of his eldest son had caused him the deepest anxiety and regret, he still regarded him with much affection; and Leicester had only too good reason to dread the

effect which might be produced upon him if, by any accident, he were to become aware of the fatal event without sufficient preparation. Accordingly, on the second day after the discovery of the catastrophe, he quitted Venice, and travelled day and night till he reached England; but fast as he journeyed, the evil tidings journeyed still more swiftly: a rumour of the truth had somehow found its way to the London clubs; at one to which he belonged Lord Ashford had accidentally overheard the affair discussed, and while uttering a half-frantic inquiry in regard to the speaker's authority, was seized with a fit, from which he recovered only to remain a heart-broken man, paralysed and childish. Charles finding him in this deplorable state, was of course unable to leave him, and wrote to Laura to beg that no unnecessary delay might occur to prevent her joining him as soon as possible. Under these circumstances, General Grant resolved to proceed to England at once, with the party under his charge.

When Frere's anxiety for Lewis's life had ended, and he felt satisfied that he was on the road towards recovery, and might safely be entrusted to the care of Antonelli, he had made his way to the Palazzo Grassini, and seeking an interview with General Grant, had explained to him the object which had brought him to Venice, together with the train of events which had hitherto prevented his announcing his arrival. He also gave an account of the *fracas* between Lord Bellefield and Lewis at the Casino, and his friend's subsequent self-conquest, in resolving for conscience' sake to forego his revenge; but he said nothing of Lewis's attachment to Annie, feeling that he had no right to betray his confidence to the General without obtaining his consent to the measure.

General Grant was much interested by this recital, and highly extolled Lewis's conduct throughout the whole affair, the shock of Lord Bellefield's death having taken away any little prejudices in favour of duelling which might have lingered in the chivalrous mind of the old soldier. He thought, however, that considering the relative positions of the different parties, it would be better for him not to visit Lewis so soon after the awful catastrophe which had taken place, but he sent him a kind message by Frere, saying he should hope to see him on his return to England, and thanking him for his interference in Walter's behalf.

On the morning previous to that fixed for the departure of Laura and her friends, Lewis, having over-exerted himself the day before by painting for several hours, and having paid the penalty by lying awake during great part of the night, had fallen into a deep sleep, which lasted so long, that Frere, having breakfasted and given orders that Lewis was on no account to be disturbed, went out. He had undertaken, with his usual good nature, innumerable commissions for the General; these he set to work diligently to execute, and after wandering up and down the lanes and squares of Venice, now trudging like an excited postman, now sitting bolt upright in the stern of a gondola, with *the* cotton umbrella spread like a gigantic mushroom over his head to keep off the sun, he arrived, hot and tired, at the Palazzo Grassini. General Grant was from home, so Frere left a card, saying

he would call later in the afternoon; then, considering on second thoughts that it would not be kind, as he had been out so long, to leave Lewis again on the same day, he altered his determination, and desiring to be shown into the library, sent a message to ask to be allowed to speak to Mrs. Leicester, or to Miss Grant. Now the servant to whom this message was entrusted, being, like many of his betters, averse to needless trouble, and chancing to encounter Annie as he was proceeding from the library to the drawing-room, saw fit slightly to alter the tenor of his message, and leaving out all mention of Laura, informed Miss Grant that a gentleman of the name of Frere, having called to visit the General, had, on learning that he was from home, asked to be allowed to see her. This intelligence rather flurried Annie, Frere being always connected in her mind with the idea of Lewis, and it was not without a degree of trepidation, which mantled her cheek with a most becoming blush, that she hastened to comply with his summons.

When Frere perceived who it was that his message had produced, a scheme, which had suggested itself to him as a vague possibility, as he had sat by Lewis's bedside listening to the ravings of his delirium, recurred to his mind, as a right and advisable step which it behoved him to take, now that chance had thrown the opportunity in his way; his first business, however, was to deliver himself of the commissions entrusted to him by the General. Having relieved his mind of the weight of this responsibility, he began—

“Well, Miss Grant, I'm glad to see you looking better than you were. I suppose it's the”—(having got rid of your detestable engagement was his original sentence, but he checked himself, and substituted)—“idea of getting away from this horrid place, all puddles and palaces; the men every one of them either a tyrant or a slave, and such lazy rascals into the bargain; the women, not at all the style of female to talk to you about; and without any particular beauty to account for it either, as far as I'm a judge, though perhaps in my present position I'm a little bit over fastidious; but then Rose Arundel is as near perfection as anything on this earth can be—however, I'm forgetting you don't know anything of the matter, and all that I'm saying must be high Dutch, or thereabouts, to you.”

And having by this time talked himself into a regular entanglement, the worthy bear came to a sudden and unexpected standstill. Annie hastened to relieve him.

“You have, indeed, let me into a secret, Mr. Frere,” she said, smiling; “but it is quite safe in my hands, and it is a secret, moreover, which I am delighted to hear: there is no one in whose happiness I take deeper interest than in that of dear Rose Arundel, and I quite approve of the step you hint at as being likely to secure it. You must allow me to offer you my warmest congratulations.”

“Thank ye, thank ye,” returned Frere, looking most comically bashful, and routing his hair about insanely in his embarrassment, “I certainly do hope to make her happy, God bless her; though I don't think you can judge much about it one way or other, seeing that I may be a Bear in reality (she calls me one in fun, you know), meaning to eat her up bodily for aught you can tell. As to its being much of a

secret, too many people know it, too many women in particular, to render that possible; so, though I don't want it announced in the *Times* till the event actually comes off, you need not put any violent constraint upon your natural communicativeness, for I am not so ignorant of the idiosyncrasies of the fair sex as to forget the pain and grief constrained silence occasions them."

Annie made a playful rejoinder, and then, after a minute's pause, ventured timidly to ask, "I hope Mr. Arundel continues to gain strength. I—that is my father—and indeed all of us were so grieved to hear of his illness!"

Frere fixed his large eyes upon her as he replied gruffly, "Yes, he's getting on well enough for anything I know to the contrary; but he's as weak as a child. It will be months before he becomes anything like the man he was; he's been unpleasantly near supplying a vacancy in some moist graveyard of this amphibious city; small thanks to those who helped to bring him to such a condition."

Annie turned very pale at this somewhat unfeeling speech, but she managed to stammer out, "I thought, that is, we were told that it was a fever, produced by exposure to malaria, from which Mr. Arundel had suffered."

"A fever it was, and no mistake," was the reply; "such a fever as I should be very sorry to fall in the way of catching, I can tell you."

"And yet you have nursed him through it with the most unceasing self-devotion. You see I know you better than you are aware of, Mr. Frere," interrupted Annie with a beaming smile.

"Nurse him! why, of course I did; if I hadn't, I should have deserved to be well kicked," returned Frere in a tone of intense disgust. "I've known Lewis ever since he was a pretty black-eyed boy of ten years old, and though he is a little hot-headed and impetuous sometimes, that's no reason why I should leave him to die of a fever in a foreign land, far away from those that care about him. A nice sort of friend I should be if I did, and a pretty figure I should cut the next time I came in Rose's way! She is not one of those who love people by halves, I can tell you; why, she actually dotes on her brother."

"Oh, I am sure she does; it was that which first made me love her," exclaimed Annie with enthusiasm; then seeing all that her speech involved, she blushed "celestial rosy red" and cast down her eyes in confusion.

"Humph!" grunted Frere, "that sounds all very nice and amiable, but I prefer deeds to words! I'll tell you what it is, Miss Grant," he continued, turning suddenly upon Annie, "you talked about malaria being the exciting cause of Lewis's illness, it was no such thing—the cause of his fever was anguish of mind—the poor boy's been miserable for the last two years, almost crazy with grief, as I take it, for he has been doing all sorts of wild, unreasonable things; and if the truth must be told, it strikes me it's more your fault than any one else's."

"My fault!" exclaimed Annie, her face and neck flushing crimson at this unexpected charge. "Oh, Mr. Frere, how can you speak such cruel words?"

"Because they happen to be true ones, young lady," returned Frere

sternly. "You are the daughter of a rich man, and a man in a high station, and for that reason it's very seldom you have the plain, honest truth spoken to you; but you shall learn it to-day from my lips, if you never heard it before in your life, and if it is not palatable, the fault does not rest with me. I knew something of this same affair when Lewis quitted Broadhurst all in a hurry, two years ago, and I set it down as a foolish bit of boyish romance, which a few months' absence would cure; but it was not till I watched by his bedside, and listened through the solemp hours of the night to his frenzied ravings, that I became aware the passion he felt for you was rooted in his very heart's core, and saw that by his deep, his overpowering love for one who I fear was not worthy of him, he had shipwrecked the happiness of a lifetime. Silence!" he continued angrily, as Annie, half rising from her seat, seemed about to interrupt him, "silence! you have voluntarily, or involuntarily, been the cause of deep misery to the two persons (for Rose has suffered greatly on her brother's account) for whom I care most in the world, and you shall learn before we part the evil consequences of your acts, and tell me whether you possess either the will or the power to repair them."

Annie again attempted to speak, but finding her accuser would not listen to her, sunk back with a gesture of despair, while Frere continued—

"Very early in his residence at Broadhurst, Lewis, as I imagine, became attached to you, though for a long time he would not acknowledge the fact even to himself: at length, however, self-deception became impossible; then began the struggle between his pride and his affection; and from that period to the hour in which he quitted Broadhurst he lived in a state of mental torture. Well, you could not help his falling in love with you, you will say; and because a poor tutor was bold and foolish enough to forget the difference of position between you (which, by the way, he never did for one moment, though the recollection was agony to his proud spirit), and to raise his eyes to his employer's daughter, you were not bound to forget it also—I grant you that—but shall I tell you what you could have helped? (which I should never have known anything about but for poor Lewis's delirious ravings)—you could have helped saying and doing a hundred little nameless things, trifles in themselves perhaps (so are straws, but they show which way the wind blows!), things which gave the poor fellow the idea that you returned his affection, and that had he dared to declare his feelings, he might have obtained such a confession from you; an attempt which he was far too honourable to make, but rather, with an aching heart, tore himself away from Broadhurst, throwing up every prospect he then had in life: you might have helped this, Miss Annie Grant, and if you had been worthy of the love of such a noble nature you would have done so."

As Frere, completely carried away by the excited feelings which his recapitulation of Lewis's wrongs and sufferings had aroused, paused for breath, poor Annie, who during the latter portion of his harangue had been utterly unable to restrain her tears, replied in a voice scarcely audible through emotion—

"You cruelly misjudge me, Mr. Frere—most cruelly—and are making an unkind and ungenerous use of knowledge which, if your friend had retained his reason, would never have been in your possession."

Frere felt the justice of this reproach, and moreover the sight of poor Annie's tears appealed to his kindness of heart, and served to disarm his wrath.

"Well, that is certainly true," he said, "and if I have indeed misjudged you, why I can only say I am very sorry for it; at all events I need not have spoken so harshly and rudely to you; but you see, Miss Grant, I feel very deeply about this matter, and the idea that all which Lewis has suffered had been the consequence of your love of admiration and idle coquetry made me angry with you."

"Indeed, indeed, I am no coquette," murmured poor Annie.

"Well, you seem to have behaved like one, at all events," returned Frere; "unless, indeed," he continued, as a new light suddenly broke in upon him—"unless, indeed, you really do by any chance care about Lewis as much as he cares about you—of course in that event you would be more to be pitied than blamed." He paused, then after a moment's reflection, continued, "But no, that cannot be either; if you had really loved Lewis, you would scarcely have engaged yourself to another man before he had been out of the house four-and-twenty hours. What do you say to that? eh, young lady!"

Poor Annie! heavily indeed did her fault press upon her; most bitterly did she repent the weakness of character which had prevented her from refusing to engage her hand when her heart went not with it. What could she say? Why, she could only sob like an unhappy child, and whisper in a broken voice—

"I will send Laura to you—ask her, she knows all—she can tell you."

And so running out of the room, she threw herself upon her friend's neck, and begged her, incoherently and vaguely, to "go immediately to *him* and explain *everything*;" with which request Laura, when she had provided the solitary pronoun with a chaperon in the shape of a concordant noun, and restricted the transcendental "everything" to mean the one thing needful in that particular case, hastened to comply.

The commission was rather a delicate one, and the excellent Bear did not render the execution thereof the less difficult by choosing to take a hard-headed, moral, and common-sense view of Annie's conduct, which confused Laura to such a degree, that in her desire to be particularly lucid, she contrived to entangle the matter so thoroughly that a person with greater tact and more delicate perceptions than the rough and straightforward Frere might have found the affair puzzling.

"Well, I tell you what it is, Mrs. Leicester," he at last exclaimed abruptly, "if you were to talk to me till midnight, which, seeing you've a long journey before you to-morrow, would be equally fatiguing and injudicious, you would never be able to convince me that your young friend acted wisely. The idea of accepting that unhappy man (whose death, between ourselves, was a gain to everybody but himself, though,

of course, I shall not say so to poor Charles, who in his amiability contrived to keep up a sort of affection for his brother); but the notion of accepting him to prevent anybody guessing she was in love with Lewis seems to me about the most feeble-minded expedient that ever occurred to the imagination, even of a woman; it's like cutting one's throat to cure a sore finger. I don't admire the principle of judging actions by their results, or I should say the result of this has been just what I should have expected—viz., to make everybody miserable. However, though she has done a foolish thing, that is very different from doing a deliberately wicked one. Well, I suppose we must not be too hard upon her, poor little thing; I dare say Lewis, at all events, will be magnanimous enough to overlook it, in consideration of her correct taste in properly appreciating his good qualities; however, I'll do my best to explain the matter to him, and put it in as favourable a light as my conscience will allow me. And so wishing you a good journey, I'll be off. I have a notion it won't be very long before Lewis and I shall follow you; we shall not be many hours in England before we beat up your quarters, depend upon it. Lewis will have some strange revelations to make to Governor Grant that will cause his venerable locks to stand on end in amazement. Ah! it's a queer world. Well, good-bye, Mrs. Leicester: I expect you and I should become good friends in time, though you're quite mistaken if you fancy that young woman acted sensibly in accepting her scampish cousin, when all the time she was in love with another man."

And thus Richard Frere fairly talked himself out of the house, leaving Laura especially astonished at his *brusquerie*, and decidedly of opinion that she had mismanaged the affair and done her friend's cause irreparable injury.

CHAPTER LXVII.

RELATES HOW, THE ECLIPSE BEING OVER, THE SUN BEGAN TO SHINE AGAIN.

IN the meantime, Lewis having awoke from his long sleep, and finding himself all the better and stronger for his nap, had just breakfasted with much appetite when Antonelli appeared and handed him a note. It was from Laura (written before her interview with Frere), informing him of their intended departure on the morrow, begging him to call upon her immediately he returned to England, which, as soon as his health would permit, she advised him to do without loss of time, and winding up with a hint that, in regard to the matter which especially interested him, he might make himself quite easy, for that everything could be most satisfactorily explained.

Lewis read and re-read the note. "The matter that especially interested him!"—that could have but one meaning. Oh, yes! Annie had cleared herself—she had never accepted Lord Bellefield; or, if she had, she had been cheated into doing so. Annie was good and true—the Annie of his imagination—the bright, fair, loving, gentle

being his soul worshipped! But he must have certainty—he must not again be the dupe of his own wishes; no, he must have certainty, and he must have it at once. Wait till his return to England? Why, that might be days, weeks hence! And was he all that time to suffer the tortures of suspense? It was not to be thought of. He must see Laura before her departure and learn the truth. But this would necessitate a visit to the Palazzo Grassini, in which he must run the chance of encountering the General or Annie. And as his thoughts reverted to her, the idea for the first time occurred to him of the mental suffering she must have undergone if, as he now believed, she had indeed truly loved him, and been in some unaccountable manner forced by circumstances to consent to the engagement with her cousin. Then he remembered the scene in the Square of St. Mark, and a sense of the cruelty of his own conduct towards her overwhelmed him. This decided the question. He would at all risks see Laura; and if—as he now did not for a moment doubt—her explanation proved satisfactory, he would entreat her to obtain Annie's forgiveness. She *must* forgive him when she came to know all he had suffered—when she heard how ill he had been: and as he thought of his illness the somewhat perplexing question occurred to him how he was to reach the Palazzo Grassini in his present weak state? Never mind; where there was a will there was a way. He *would* do it, he was determined; and so he summoned Antonelli, and to the alarm of that worthy man, who fancied the fever had again flown to the brain, and that his beloved master was delirious, announced that he was going out to pay a visit, and requested his assistance in dressing himself.

It was not till his toilet was completed and he attempted to walk downstairs that he became aware how weak and helpless his illness had left him, and it required all his resolution to persevere in his expedition. Luckily the distance was short, and he was enabled to perform some part of it in a gondola; still, by the time he reached the Palazzo Grassini his strength was so completely exhausted that if he had been required to proceed a hundred yards further he would have been unable to accomplish the task. Having inquired if Mrs. Leicester was at home and received an answer in the affirmative, he continued—

“Then show me up to her boudoir unannounced; I will hold you blameless for doing so.”

The servant, who knew how intimate Lewis had been there before the coming of the Grant party, and how his visits had ceased with their arrival, naturally enough conjectured that the young painter was for some reason desirous to avoid encountering any of the General's family, and complied with his request unhesitatingly. But the domestic in question, who chanced to be the same individual who had admitted Frere, was not aware of the additional and, to the parties concerned, somewhat important fact, that since he had performed that service Miss Grant and his mistress had changed places, and that at the moment he was conducting Lewis to the boudoir that apartment was tenanted by Annie Grant, while Laura was engaged in solemn conclave with Richard Frere in the library. Thus it fell out that when

the door of the boudoir was noiselessly opened, Annie Grant, who had remained there after she had despatched Laura on her difficult mission to Ursa Major, and *more majorum*, from the time of Niobe downwards, had indulged her feelings with a hearty cry, was wiping her eyes and trying to make herself believe that her troubles must be "working to an end," and that dim on the horizon of her future fate there might be discerned a good time coming. Annie thus pondering, and thus engaged, saw a tall, bending figure enter, in whose well-known features, their expression softened and spiritualised by severe illness, she needed no announcement to recognise Lewis Arundel.

The windows of Laura's boudoir were shaded from the burning rays of an Italian sun by (literally) Venetian blinds, which kept out not only the heat, but in great measure the light also; and Lewis, whose eyes were dizzy and his head swimming from weakness, perceiving a female figure advancing towards him, naturally conjectured it to be Laura, and accosted her as follows—

"You are no doubt surprised to see me here, but after perusing your note I could not rest till I had learned the truth from your own lips, and as you are to quit Venice to-morrow, there was no time to lose; so I resolved, *coute qui coute*, to make the effort, and here I am."

He paused for a reply, but obtaining none, looked up in surprise, and perceived Annie Grant standing pale and trembling before him. Completely overcome by this unexpected encounter, he contrived to stammer out—

"I beg pardon, I believed I was addressing Mrs. Leicester. I must go and seek her," and turned to put his design into execution; but his strength was unequal to the task, and leaning against a marble slab, he remained motionless, utterly unable to proceed. For a moment Annie paused as if thunder-stricken, then her woman's heart awoke within her, and in an instant she was by his side, bringing a chair for him to sit down.

"Oh, Mr. Arundel, how wrong, how mad of you to venture out," she exclaimed, her anxiety for him overpowering every other feeling; "you will bring on a return of the fever. Why, you are so weak that you can scarcely stand; pray sit down."

Advancing a step, Lewis took the chair from her, and leaning on the back for support, said with a faint smile—

"I have indeed somewhat miscalculated my strength, Miss Grant; I am very, very weak," and as he spoke he sank upon the seat, while the bright flush, which the excitement of beholding Annie had called into his cheeks, faded to the most deathlike paleness: his companion became alarmed.

"You are faint," she said; "let me ring for assistance."

A tray, with a decanter of water and some glasses, stood upon a table near; Lewis's eye fell upon them.

"It is merely the unaccustomed exertion," he said feebly, "it will pass away in a moment."

Annie caught the direction of his glance. "You would like a glass of water," she exclaimed, "let me give you one;" and suiting the action to the word, she filled a glass with the sparkling liquid and handed it

to him. He took it with a slight inclination of the head, drank it eagerly, and was about to rise, in order to put down the glass, when Annie, by a deprecating gesture, prevented him, and taking it from his trembling fingers replaced it on the table. As she turned from doing so, their eyes met, and she perceived that his were fixed on her features with a deep, earnest, scrutinising gaze, as though he strove to read in her countenance the history of her inner life. For a moment she met his gaze with a bright, truthful, unshrinking look; then, unable to bear the power of his eagle eye, she turned away with a blush and a smile, half tender, half reproachful, for Annie was no stoic, and every feeling of her heart revealed itself in her tell-tale countenance. Lewis could bear it no longer—speak he must.

“Miss Grant—Annie,” he said, and as he pronounced her Christian name his deep voice trembled with suppressed emotion, “when I came here to-day I had no thought of seeing you; but accident (if, indeed, in this strange, complicated life anything may be so considered) has determined it otherwise, and the opportunity shall not be lost. Not very many days since I was so grievously ill that the chances were strongly against my rallying; it has pleased God to spare my life a little longer; but such an escape as this gives rise to deep and solemn thoughts. While I lay upon the bed of sickness, which had so nearly proved the bed of death, I learned to read my own heart—my past life glided as it were in review before me, and my faults and errors, no longer hidden by the mists of self-deceit or of passion, revealed themselves clearly in the light of an awakened conscience: above them all stood forth in its evil beauty the master-demon pride, and I saw how it had embittered my whole existence, and how, if ever I hoped to obtain even peace of mind, much more happiness, I must relax no effort until I should subdue it. Annie, I have loved you long; you cannot, *do* not doubt it; but because I deemed you richer than I was, and of higher rank, I was too proud to own it to you. Years of mental torture have been my punishment: I do not complain that this should have been so—I do not impugn the justice of the decree; on the contrary, I acknowledge it with deep contrition. I sinned, and it was fitting I should pay the penalty, however bitter; but there was a grief I was not prepared for, and in which I could not discern retributive justice; for whatever a slanderous world may say, my love for you has been deep, pure, and disinterested, the truest, most earnest feeling of my inmost soul. Annie, I will be frank with you, and even if my presumption ruins my cause, I have suffered too much from concealment not to tell you the whole truth. When, distracted by my hopeless passion for you, and maddened by the insults of one who is now no more, I tore myself away from Broadhurst, and left you, as I deemed, for ever, the most bitter pang proceeded from a secret belief, which even despair could not banish, that I read in your soft glances assurance that had I dared to urge my suit, I might have learned I had not loved in vain; and in the midst of my desolation I was happy, deeply happy, in the thought. Then a ray of light broke in upon the darkness—a strange chain of events led to the discovery that I was heir to an ancient and honourable name and an ample fortune, and I

waited but to obtain legal evidence of the fact, ere I hastened to tell you of my affection, in the fond hope of eliciting that I was beloved again: once assured of that, I determined that *nothing* should prevent my winning your hand—all obstacles must yield before such a love as mine. With these feelings burning in my breast, imagine the dismay which overwhelmed me on learning by a letter from your father that scarcely twenty-four hours after I had quitted Broadhurst, you, of your own free will, had renewed your engagement with your cousin. Hear me out," he continued, as Annie, who with blushing cheeks and tearful eyes, had remained as though spell-bound, drinking in his every tone, attempted eagerly to interrupt him—"hear me out, and then if you can explain this mystery, the devotion of a life-time shall plead forgiveness for my having misjudged you. How I lived through the wretchedness that letter caused me, I do not know. I believed I was going mad, for a time I *was* mad, and railed at Heaven for having created a being so fair and false as then I deemed you. Oh! the misery, the heavy, crushing grief, when the heart adores, with all its faculty of loving, one whom the reason points out as light, fickle, and all unworthy to have called forth such true affection. For two years this black veil of doubt and mistrust hung between your image and my spirit—I cast from me any idea of claiming the rank and riches that were my birthright, for I valued them only as they could bring me nearer to you; and went forth a wanderer, tormented by the consciousness, doubly humiliating to one of my proud nature, that although I believed you unworthy of my affection, I still loved you devotedly as ever. The first person who won me from my gloomy thoughts, and led me to hope your conduct might be satisfactorily explained, was your kind friend Laura, who in her honest singleness of heart could not believe in the possibility of the fickleness of which I imagined you guilty—and I (though her arguments failed to convince my reason), how I loved her for her unbelief! I could say much more—could tell you of the agony of mind I endured, when unseen by you I watched you leaning on *his* arm and smiling upon him, and deemed my worst fears realised, and that you loved him; but it is needless—Annie, I cannot look on you and believe you false; if indeed you ever loved me, I *know* that, despite appearances, you have been true to that affection, and that you love me still. Annie, dearest, tell me that it is so?"

He ceased, and with his hands clasped, as those of some votary adoring his saint, sat gazing on the April of smiles and tears that played over the expressive features of her he loved, until reading in her tender glances the secret her lips refused to speak, happiness lent him strength, and springing to her side, he drew her unresistingly towards him, and reproved the coral lips for their silence by sealing his forgiveness upon them with a loving kiss. And as Annie, albeit there is no reason to doubt that she was an exceedingly moral and well-conducted young lady, did not appear to discern any great impropriety in this act, but, on the contrary, disengaged herself from his embrace gently and tenderly, the probabilities are, looking at the matter in a correct light, and with an artist eye (an optical delusion,

popularly supposed to fulfil one of the main duties of charity by clothing the naked), that the view she took of the affair was a right one. And then by degrees, having declared that it was impossible she could ever tell him anything about it, but that Laura knew—would not he go and ask Laura at once? (a proposition Lewis coolly but decidedly rejected), she contrived, she never knew how, to enable him to guess the truth, which he did very quickly and cleverly, and found so perfectly satisfactory that his anger (such mild anger!) instantly changed to the most unmitigated pity, an emotion so nearly akin to that other Christian virtue, love, that we fear we shall lay ourselves open to the charge of writing an actual love scene if we pursue the subject any further. And as it is a well-ascertained fact that young persons strictly brought up and never allowed to inflame their imaginations and gain perverted views of life by perusing those inventions of the enemy of man- (and woman-) kind, works of fiction, either never fall in love at all or do so according to parental act of parliament, passed in the year one of the reign of good king Mammon, we (lest we incur the high displeasure of any of this monarch's respectable subjects) will say no more about it. But when Laura, grieved at what she considered the unsatisfactory issue of her interview with Richard Frere, returned to her boudoir to make the best report her conscience would allow of to Annie, she was especially surprised, and a little frightened, to discover her friend, with heightened colour, downcast eyes, and a bright smile playing about the corners of her mouth, sitting on a sofa by the side of what Laura would have taken for the ghost of Lewis Arundel, only that ghosts do not in a general way look intensely happy, and are not usually addicted to holding young ladies' hands caressingly between their spectral fingers. However, the ghost soon vindicated his claim to the protection of the Habeas Corpus Act by rising and shaking Laura's hand cordially, and taking the initiative in conversation by exclaiming—

"My dear, kind Mrs. Leicester, I owe all my happiness to you."

Then Laura began to surmise what had happened, and in the excess of her joy scolded Lewis so vigorously for his madness in venturing out, and Annie for her folly in allowing him to talk, that she was forced to stop in the midst of her harangue to declare herself a virago, and to laugh so heartily at her own vehemence that in order to save herself from becoming hysterical she was fain to betake herself to her own bedroom and indulge in the feminine luxury of a good cry. And then Lewis and Annie sat and looked into each other's eyes; their joy was too full for words, but such silence as theirs is far more eloquent, for as there is a grief too deep for tears, so is there happiness which language is powerless to express, and such happiness did they experience at that moment. At length Lewis spoke.

"Dearest," he said, in a low, soft voice that trembled with the tenderness which filled his soul, "I must leave you now; there are many reasons which forbid my meeting your father till we reach England and I am prepared to *prove* to him all that your trustful, loving heart believes because I tell you that it is so. Until we meet in our own happy country, which for the future will be as dear to me

for your sake as lately it has been for the same cause hateful, our engagement must remain a secret from all but Laura."

"But will that be right?" pleaded Annie, looking up wistfully into the face of him who would be from thenceforth her oracle.

It is a fearful responsibility when, through the affections, we gain such a hold over a living soul that the judgment lies dormant, and the thing which seems good in our eyes appears so in theirs also; such influence is indeed a mighty talent committed to our charge, and most careful should we be lest we abuse the trust reposed in us. Lewis felt this strongly, and paused to reconsider his decision. His chief reason for wishing that General Grant might not be immediately informed of his declaration was the difficult position in which it would place the gallant officer in regard to Lord Bellefield's relations. How could he, for instance, expect Lord Ashford to believe that his brother-in-law had used all possible exertion to secure the murderer of his son when Annie Grant, that son's destined bride, was affianced to a man who, but for the catastrophe which had taken place, would have met Lord Bellefield in a duel? the altercation and subsequent challenge being so completely a matter of notoriety in Venice that it was certain that some account of them, probably an exaggerated and distorted one, would find its way to England. But this was a reason which he could not give Annie, as he correctly imagined that the affair at the Casino had been kept from her knowledge. Thus the more he reflected the more certain he became that his original determination was a right one. Accordingly he replied—

"Trust me, dear one; concealment is as foreign to my nature as to your own. My faults (and I have only too many) do not lie in that direction; but, to the best of my judgment, I believe that in wishing your father should, for the present, remain ignorant of our engagement, I am consulting your interest and his quite as much as my own. Believe me, love, I would sacrifice anything, even the cherished hope of one day calling you my own, rather than influence you to do aught for which your conscience could afterwards upbraid you."

And Annie did believe him, with the strong, unhesitating faith of perfect love. Had he advanced the most incredible assertion—declared, for instance, that he had discovered perpetual motion, squared the circle, and set the Thames on fire, Annie would equally and implicitly have believed him. Had he deceived her, her only refuge from a universal scepticism would have been to die. Then came the "sweet sorrow" of a lovers' parting—sweet in the many evidences of affection which the occasion calls forth, and sorrowful by reason of the anxious thoughts to which quitting those we love, even under the happiest auspices, necessarily gives rise. Annie's bright eyes were dim with tears, and Lewis's mouth, no longer sternly compressed, trembled with the emotion he in vain attempted to conceal, as, with a murmured "God bless and protect you, my own darling!" he tore himself away.

In the meanwhile, scarcely had Richard Frere quitted the Grassini Palace than he encountered General Grant, fretting and fuming under the weight of a burden of minor miseries, and full of complaints of

the abominable misdemeanours of the Venetian officials, amongst which, by no means the lightest, was the culpable stupidity which prevented them from speaking or understanding English, together with the obstinate prejudice with which they refused to acknowledge that by adding the letter O to the termination of words in that language they immediately became Italian—

"I said '*requiro uno passporto*' to them, sir, half-a-dozen times over, and nobody shall ever make me believe they did not know what *that* meant!" was his indignant complaint.

Of course Frere's ready sympathy entailed on him a request that if he could spare the time to go back to the office with him, the General would esteem it such a great favour, and of course, though his conscience reproached him for being away from "poor, solitary Lewis" for so many hours, he did what was required of him; and of course, having said A,—B, C, and D followed as a matter of necessity, until, before he had gone through the alphabet of the General's commissions, several hours had elapsed, and Lewis, having found his way back to his lodgings, was reclining in an easy-chair enjoying a feast of happy memories and bright anticipations, when Frere, hot, tired, and dissatisfied with his morning's work, flung down his cotton umbrella, and throwing himself, very much unbuttoned, in a kind of dishevelled heap upon the nearest chair, began—

"Well, confound this climate, say I, where a man can't get through a morning's business without coming home more like a piece of hot boiled beef than a temperate Christian—here's a state of dissolution for a free-born Briton to be in. I tell you what it is, young man, if you keep me here much longer I shall become a mere walking skeleton—flesh and blood literally can't stand it, and I shall have to go home and be married in my bones."

"By which ceremony I suppose you hope to become possessed of an additional rib to make up for your loss of substance," suggested Lewis, smiling at the odd, quaint way in which his friend described his troubles.

"Yes, it's all very well for you to sit there and laugh at a fellow," returned Frere grumpily, "but if you had been parading about this oven of a place for two hours, tied like a kettle to Governor Grant's tail, as I have been, you would find it no such laughing matter, I can tell you. He is obstinate and wrong-headed as an elderly mule too, making a fuss about trifles that do not signify a bit one way or the other. Why cannot he take life coolly and quietly as—as——?"

Here he came to an abrupt conclusion, having discovered that the grumbling tenor of the speech was somewhat at variance with the ending he had intended to make to it—viz., "as I do." Lewis finished it for him.

"As a sensible man should do, I suppose you were going to observe."

Frere detected the covert satire and shook his fist threateningly at his friend.

"You had better be civil, you know, or I may be tempted to give you the thrashing I have owed you so long. I could not have a

better opportunity than now, when you are so weak that you can scarcely walk across the room alone."

"Perhaps I may be stronger than you are aware of," returned Lewis; "what do you think about my being able to go out, for instance——?"

"Think," replied Frere dogmatically; "why, I think that if you attempt it a week hence it will be too soon. Dr. Grabafee says a fortnight, but his is scarcely an unprejudiced opinion; however, I'll take care you don't set foot outside this room within a week."

Lewis turned away to hide a smile, while Frere, still suffering from heat, and not having another available button which could be respectably unfastened, pulled off his neckcloth, and thus relieved, resumed—

"Who do you think I have been lecturing this morning?"

Lewis professed his ignorance, and Frere continued—

"Only a certain young lady, in whose proceedings I've an idea you take particular interest—one Miss Annie Grant."

Lewis started as Frere pronounced this name, but recovering himself, asked in an elaborately indifferent tone of voice, "Pray when did this interesting colloquy take place, and what might be the subject thereof?"

"The colloquy, as you call it, took place some four hours ago; and the subject thereof was the young woman's conduct towards your precious self. Now, don't go and fly into a passion," continued Frere, as Lewis coloured and seemed about to make some hasty rejoinder; "remember, life ought to be taken easily and quietly by a sensible man, and of course you consider yourself one: however, I took the liberty to tell Miss General Grant a few home truths that she will be none the worse for hearing."

He then proceeded, after his own fashion, to give an account of his conversation with Annie, and his subsequent interview with Laura, concluding his recital thus—

"So the upshot of the whole affair, and a very unsatisfactory one I'm afraid you'll think it, is this. When you had left Broadhurst, Ma'am-selle Annie found herself in a bit of a fix, and not being a man or Rose Arundel, she, after the fashion of her silly sex, did a weak and injudicious thing; but as I said to the other young woman, who, by the way, seems to have the best sense of the two, that's very different from doing a deliberately wicked one, and therefore, perhaps, Lewis may be induced to look over it."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, don't tell me any more about it, you will drive me frantic with your detestable common-sense platitudes," exclaimed Lewis, springing from his chair impatiently; "at least you would have done so," he continued more quietly, "if I had not happened to have seen Miss Grant myself since your well-meant but somewhat unnecessary interview with her, and learned from her own sweet lips that she forgives me for having so hastily and ungenerously misjudged her."

"Eh! what! has the young woman been here in my absence?" returned Frere, greatly scandalised. "Oh! this will never do! I don't allow such liberties to be taken with my patient; besides, I don't

consider the proceeding by any means a correct one; she might have found you in bed, with your nightcap on, for aught she could tell to the contrary."

"Do you know what is reported to have occurred when a mountain objected to come at Mahomet's bidding?" asked Lewis quietly.

"Why, Mahomet went to the mountain, to be sure, like an arrant humbug as he was; but what has that got to do with the case in question? Why, you don't mean to say," continued Frere, as a sudden light broke in upon him—"you don't mean to say that *you've* been to call upon *her*?"

"I am afraid I must confess that such is the alarming fact," was the cool reply.

"Well! I have known many insane actions in my life, certainly," growled Frere, making fruitless attempts to re-unbutton his already enfranchised garments, "but this"—here he nearly tore a wristband off his shirt in his pursuit of coolness under difficulties—"is the very maddest thing I ever did hear of—a man that was on the point of death here not ten days ago to rush out of bed the moment one's back is turned for the sake of seeing——"

"She is looking so sweetly pretty, Frere," interrupted Lewis; "and those eyes—there never were such eyes seen in the world before."

"Oh, of course not," returned Frere viciously. "Patent double-actioned, high-pressure, sky-blue revolvers, made to look every way at once, see through mill-stones, and peep round the corner into the bargain, *they* are, no doubt; but if she could use them to no better purpose than to lure out, at the risk of his life, a foolish boy that ought to have had more sense—but it's a mere waste of words talking to you," he continued, catching a smile on Lewis's features; "and here have I gone and ruined my other shirt, and this one is at the wash—psha! I mean to say, ruined my other wash—that is, washed my other ruin—hang me if I know what I mean to say—only if you're not the worse for this—bother the boy, how absurdly happy he's looking! So it's all right between you, eh! Lewis? Well, Heaven knows, you have suffered enough to deserve that it should be so, my poor fellow, and though you must have been mad to go out, and I ought to be very angry with you, yet, as it has ended, and always supposing it does not do you any harm, why I am heartily glad you did it;" and so saying, Frere, whose feelings, and the heat together, were decidedly too many for him, made a precipitate retreat into the bedroom, where, for the present, we will leave him.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

LEWIS OUT-GENERALS THE GENERAL, AND THE TRAIN STOPS.

LEWIS'S recovery was not retarded by his imprudent visit to the Palazzo Grassini; and Frere had the satisfaction, ere many weeks elapsed, of perceiving that he was strong enough to render their return to England practicable. Accordingly, the "Giaour" pictures and the sketch of Annie and Faust were carefully packed (Lewis having

determined to retain them as mementos of the eventful portion of his career which led to their execution), old Antonelli received a present of money sufficient to enable him to carry out the darling wish of his heart—viz., to bestow upon his son the education of a painter; and Lewis and Frere, having wound up their affairs in Venice, quitted that city, which, filled with a rabble of revolutionary demagogues and their dupes, had become no longer a desirable place of residence. The friends reached England without any adventures worthy of record; and Rose was compensated for many a weary hour of anxiety and suspense by her joy in welcoming her brother, and learning from his lips the unmitigated satisfaction with which he had heard of her engagement to Richard Frere; and how that “glorious fellow” had redoubled all his former obligations to him by his sound advice and tender and judicious nursing. If for a moment Frere could have regretted the part he had played, the loving smile of warm approval with which Rose received him would have compensated him for any far greater expenditure of time and trouble. But Lewis had much to tell, which gave rise to very different emotions in his auditor; and Rose, as she grieved for the untimely fate of poor Jane Hardy, and shuddered at the awful retribution which had overtaken her betrayer, breathed a silent thanksgiving that her brother had been restrained from any deed of violence, to which his impetuous disposition, keen sensibilities, and quick sense of injury might have impelled him. Lewis had also something to hear as well as to communicate.

Mrs. Arundel, in her spirit of opposition to the artless and bereaved relict of the late Colonel Brahmin, had carried her flirtation with that victim of literary ambition, Dackerel Dace, Esq., to such a pitch, that when the blighted barrister determined to resign his destiny altogether in favour of matrimony, and made her an offer of his limp hand, flabby heart, and five thousand a year to give piquancy and flavour to the tasteless and insipid “trifle” he *tendered* for her acceptance, that volatile matron felt that she had committed herself too deeply to retract, and that, setting off the money against the man, the bargain after all might not be such a bad one, and so said “Yes.” Rose disliked the match greatly, and fearing Lewis would do so still more strongly, ventured upon a mild remonstrance; but when once she had taken a thing into her head, Mrs. Arundel was very determined, and Rose gained nothing but an intimation, half earnest, half playful, that as she (Mrs. Arundel) had not interfered with her daughter when she chose to engage herself to Ursa Major, she expected the same *forbearance* (and she emphasised the vile pun most unmistakably) to be exercised towards her and her odd fish, by which nickname she irreverently paraphrased the ichthyological appellation of her “*future*.”

Lewis, as Rose had feared, was both hurt and annoyed at this fresh and convincing proof of his mother's volatile and worldly nature, but there was nothing in the connection to justify his taking measures to break off the match; Mrs. Arundel was perfectly free to do as she pleased, and competent to decide her own course in life; so after one conversation with her on the subject, the nature of which may be gathered from the result, he left the affair to take its own course. His

first step on reaching London was to seek an interview with his legal adviser; their conference proving satisfactory, eventuated (to use an affected but expressive word) in sending for a patent cab, wherein Lewis ensconced himself, in company with a small lawyer and a large blue bag, and the trio drove to Park Crescent.

The feelings with which Lewis once again stood within the library of General Grant's mansion—that library where he had first been engaged to act as poor Walter's tutor—the chamber into which he and Annie had been shown on the night when he had rescued her from insult in the crush-room of the opera—the night of the unhappy Mellerton's suicide—may well be imagined. Then he had been poor, friendless, in the situation of a dependant, and made to feel that situation, alike by the open insults of Lord Bellefield and the frigid courtesy of the General and Miss Livingstone, his youth, his inexperience, sensitive disposition, and proud, impassioned nature rendering all these trials doubly galling to him; while, still more to embitter his lot, came that "sorrow's crown of sorrow," his hopeless attachment to Annie. Now heir to an ancient and honourable name and an ample fortune, his affection returned by her he loved, his rival swept from his path without his having to reproach himself with participation in the act which wrought his downfall, his mind strengthened, his principles raised, and his faults diminished, if not eradicated, by the struggle he had undergone, and above all, his soul fortified by the recollection that, through God's grace, he had been enabled, at the turning-point of his career, to sacrifice everything rather than sin against his Maker's law, how different was his position! He received a moderately cordial welcome from General Grant, which tepid reception was occasioned by a conflict in the mind of that noble commander, between his strong regard for Lewis, a sense of the obligations he lay under to him, and an uncomfortable recollection of his attachment to Annie, together with the moral impossibility of allowing his daughter to marry a man whose present income consisted of the savings of an ex-tutorship, and whose prospects embraced the doubtful gainings of a professional artist; Lewis perceived his embarrassment, and rightly conjectured its cause, which it was the object of his visit to remove. But General Grant's cold imperturbability had caused him so much annoyance in bygone hours, that a slight spice of what the French term *esprit malin* actuated him, and under its influence he began, after a few desultory remarks—

"It may possibly not have escaped your mind, General, that during a conversation I had the honour to hold with you before I finally quitted Broadhurst, I mentioned to you my devoted attachment to Miss Grant."

The General bowed in token of assent, but the cloud upon his brow grew darker. Not heeding this, Lewis continued—

"I remember expressing myself somewhat strongly against certain conventional prejudices relating to inequality of position, which opposed an effectual bar to the realisation of my wishes. I was young and inexperienced then—I have since become wiser in the ways of the world, and am perfectly aware that, in speaking as

I did on that occasion, I alike wasted my words and your valuable time."

He paused; and the General, who had been considerably puzzled during the speech to make out what his companion might be aiming at, settled, to his own satisfaction, that the increased knowledge of human nature to which Lewis alluded had shown the young man the folly of which he had been guilty, and that this speech was intended as an apology—nothing could be more respectful and correct. Accordingly the cloud vanished, as in his most gracious manner he replied, "Sir, your observations do you credit. Pray set your mind at rest on this subject; fortunately my daughter never had the slightest suspicion of your feelings towards her; and for my own part, I have long ago dismissed the affair from my recollection; and you may rest assured that in our future intercourse the subject shall never again be broached between us."

As the General alluded to his daughter's happy ignorance of Lewis's attachment a slightly ironical smile curled that young gentleman's handsome mouth; repressing it instantly, he replied with a calm, almost *nonchalant* air, "I scarcely see how that can be accomplished, General Grant, as the object of my visit here to-day is to make you a formal proposal for your daughter's hand!"

If Lewis had suddenly risen from his chair, and with the full power of his returning strength had hurled that article of furniture at General Grant's head, it might have knocked him down more literally than the foregoing speech, but, figuratively, nothing could have done so. For a minute or two he appeared utterly unable to frame a reply; then, drawing himself up to a degree suggestive of a telescopic conformation, he began in an awful tone of voice, "Sir, you have astonished me—nay, more than that, sir, you have disappointed me—very greatly disappointed me. I had hoped better things of you, sir; I had hoped, from the early promise you evinced, that your judgment and good sense would, when matured and strengthened by a little more knowledge of the world, have enabled you to conquer your strangely misplaced attachment—would, in fact, have saved me from the painful situation in which you have—to which you have—that is—you would have saved yourself (you must not blame *me*, sir, if the truth sounds unpalatable) the humiliation of a refusal."

"Then am I to understand that you unhesitatingly reject my suit?" inquired Lewis, something of the old stern look coming across his features.

"Most unequivocally and decidedly," was the concise reply.

"It would have been more courteous, and therefore more in accordance with General Grant's usual conduct towards those whom he considers beneath him in the social scale, to inquire whether any, and if so, *what* amelioration might have taken place in my future prospects to have induced me to hazard so bold a step ere my proposal was thus unmistakably declined," observed Lewis in a marked yet respectful tone of displeasure; "it will, however, make no difference in my intentions, as when I shall have obtained your answers to a few important questions, and explained to you my object in making

them, it is possible you may view my conduct in a different light."

The General, who grew taller and stiffer every moment, merely acknowledged this speech by an inclination of the head, so slight as to be scarcely perceptible; and Lewis continued—

"The late Sir Hugh Desborough, Walter's grandfather, was, I believe, your intimate friend?"

"Bless my soul, yes, sir; we served together in India, were for six years in the same regiment, and lived as if we had been brothers. Why do you ask such extraordinary questions?" exclaimed the General, startled completely out of his dignity.

"Because, in that case, you are probably well acquainted with the circumstances of his family history, and can set me right if I state them incorrectly," replied Lewis, upon whom the mantle of the General's cast-off dignity appeared suddenly to have fallen. "Sir Hugh had two sons, I believe; the elder married imprudently, quarrelled with his father, who refused to receive the lady he had espoused, and severing all family ties, lived abroad under a feigned name, and was believed to have died without issue. The second son was Walter's father, and Walter inherits the baronetcy in default of male issue of the elder son."

He paused, and the General observed, "You are correct in your facts, sir, but to what does all this lead?"

"That you will be better able to perceive, sir, when I inform you that I am prepared to prove, indisputably, and to your full satisfaction, the following additional particulars. Sir Hugh's eldest son, Captain Desborough——"

"Right; he was captain in the —th Lancers, and threw up his commission when he chose to live abroad. It was said he entered the Austrian army, and attained the same rank in that service," interrupted the General.

"He did so," resumed Lewis, who spoke in the same calm, unimpassioned voice which he had used throughout the interview, though to any one who knew him well it would have been perceivable that he did so by the greatest effort; "but those who believed that he died abroad, and without male issue, were misinformed: he died in England, in the spring of 18—, and left (besides a daughter) one son, who is still living."

"Left a son! why he would be heir to the title and estates instead of Walter. Where is he, sir? who is he?" exclaimed the General impetuously.

Lewis rose, drew himself up to his full height, advanced slowly till he stood face to face with the General, and then, fixing his piercing glance upon him, said, "He now stands before you, General Grant, and asks you whether, when he has established his rights before the eyes of the world, you will again refuse him your daughter's hand?"

Reader, the only little bit of mystery in our story (if indeed it has presented any mystery at all to your acuteness) is now cleared up; and the interest ended, the sooner the tale itself arrives at a conclusion the better. But for the satisfaction of the unimaginative, the strong-

minded women and practical men of the world, who cannot rest assured that two and two make four till they have counted it on their fingers, we will write a few more last words, winding up the various threads of this veracious history.

In his interview with General Grant, Lewis had only stated that which he was fully prepared to prove; and when the lawyer and his blue bag (not that lawyers ever do carry blue bags anywhere but in farces at the minor theatres, or those still more "unreal mockeries," the pages of modern novels) were called in to assist at the conference, the following facts were elicited:—

The packet of letters which Lewis found amongst Hardy's papers, and which gave him the first intimation that he, and not poor Walter, was heir to the title and estates of Desborough, had been written by Captain Arundel, or, as his name really was, Desborough, to his younger brother, Walter Desborough (the father of the poor idiot, who was in fact first cousin to Lewis); the object with which these letters were written being to bring about a reconciliation between Sir Hugh and his eldest son—Walter Desborough having undertaken the office of mediator. In order to do this, it was first of all necessary to disabuse Sir Hugh's mind of an idea that Captain Desborough's marriage was not valid and that the children were illegitimate; for this purpose the wedding certificate was enclosed (proving that he had been married in his own name and by a properly constituted authority), together with certificates of the baptism of Rose and of Lewis. The letters also contained an account of his having taken the name of Arundel, and his reasons for so doing; in fact, without going into minutiae, the papers afforded complete evidence legally to establish the identity of Captain Desborough and Captain Arundel, and to render Lewis's claim to the baronetcy indisputable. To account for their having been found among Hardy's papers, it must be borne in mind that Walter Desborough was the scoundrel who first roused the evil nature in that misguided man by eloping with his wife. Hardy, be it remembered, followed the guilty pair, and assaulted the betrayer of his honour to such good effect as to confine him to his bed for months; his companion in crime returned to her father's house, and died shortly after giving birth to the unfortunate Miles.

When she returned to her father, she brought with her a writing-case, in which were letters she had received from her seducer previous to her elopement; in this desk, for convenience of travelling, Walter Desborough had placed papers of his own, and amongst others, the letters, etc., which he had shortly before received from his brother. Long ere he recovered from the effects of Hardy's chastisement he had forgotten where he had placed these papers, and Hardy never discovering them (he left his home and enlisted as a soldier on his release from the imprisonment the assault entailed upon him), the letters were to all intents and purposes lost, till by a chapter of accidents they fell into the hands of Lewis. The shock which led to Captain Arundel's (or Desborough, as he should rightly have been called) sudden death was caused by reading an account of his father,

Sir Hugh's demise, in the newspaper. The clue Messrs. Jones & Levi had gained was from a shopman in the public library in which Captain Arundel had been sitting when he first became aware of his father's decease, who gathered, from an involuntary exclamation he made at the moment, that Sir Hugh Desborough's death was the subject which had so much excited him; this shopman had been a clerk of Messrs. Jones & Levi, and learning in their employ that knowledge was sometimes money as well as power, sold them for a couple of sovereigns the information he had acquired, giving at the same time an account of the strange death of Captain Arundel; hence their subsequent application to Lewis.

The evidence being so clear and full, Lewis had little difficulty in establishing his claim, more especially as General Grant, convinced of its justice, did not attempt to resist it on Walter's behalf. The poor fellow himself could not be made to comprehend his change of fortune; but he did comprehend, to his inexpressible delight, that for some reason or other he was always to live with his dear Mr. Arundel, who, when months had gone by and arrangements made which he neither understood nor heeded, took him to a grand house of his own, where Faust was waiting to receive them in a great state of boisterous tail-wagging affection; and when Faust, having licked them all over, and having made them damp, dusty, and rumpled in the excess of his love, had quite done with them and gone back to a large bone on the drawing-room rug, and Lewis placing his arm round Walter's neck, had whispered to him that he was never to go away any more, and that he hoped before very long Annie would come and live with them, Walter felt sure he had never known what it was to be quite happy till then, which fact he afterwards communicated to Faust in the strictest confidence.

Lewis's assertion in regard to Annie was not based on mere conjecture; for General Grant—albeit he felt that, in the interview we have lately recorded between himself and Lewis, he had been decidedly out-generalled—did not again reject his late tutor's proposal for his daughter's hand. On the contrary, with the usual self-knowledge of worldly elderly people (that is, of those who, nine times out of ten, dictate the actions, and influence for weal or woe the future of the young and generous-hearted), the moment he became convinced that Lewis was about to inherit a baronetcy and an income little short of £10,000 a year, he contrived to persuade himself that when his first surprise had been passed, and he had become aware how deeply his daughter's happiness was involved, he should certainly have allowed her to unite herself with Sir Lewis Desborough under his former phase of a precarious portrait-painter. But if we had been Sir Lewis, we should have felt heartily glad we had not been forced to rely on such a very "forlorn hope."

Rose, no longer Arundel, did not enjoy the name of Desborough many weeks, for although she had particularly desired to be married on the same day as Lewis and Annie, she yet yielded the point when Ursa Major, hearing that General Grant would not allow his daughter's wedding to take place till a year after the death of Lord Bellefield,

grew so outrageous that Rose was forced to marry him out of the way, in order to prevent him from snapping and growling at every one that came near him. But this was Richard Frere's last bearish episode; for constant association with Rose softened his little asperity of temper, which, having arisen solely from the unloved and unloving existence he had been forced by circumstances to lead, disappeared in the sunshine of a happy home.

Lord Ashford did not long survive the loss of his eldest son, and Charley Leicester, the portionless younger brother, with "a good set of teeth and nothing to eat," is now a highly respectable peer of the realm, with a rent-roll to be computed by tens of thousands. Happy in the affection of his wife and children (for "Tarley" has already had two successors to dispute the chance of being "spoiled by papa, only that mamma won't let him"), Charles, Lord Ashford, has but one trouble in life, though that unfortunately appears likely to prove an increasing one—viz., that those confounded fellows, Schneider & Shears, *won't* make his waistcoats to fit him as they used to do, they are all too tight round the waist—and Schneider & Shears bear the blame meekly, having only last week discharged an injudicious foreman, who had been rash enough to declare that their excellent customer, Lord Ashford, was growing stout. For a short time the Countess Portici resided with her brother and sister-in-law, Alessandro having obligingly got himself knocked on the head in the cause of liberty, the reversion of this popular watchword being about the only legacy he bequeathed to his young, interesting, and not particularly disconsolate widow, who, having sown her romance, replaced the handsome Italian by a rich old French nobleman, Le Marquis de Carosse-Tranquille, irreverently translated by Bracy, who is still a bachelor and makes more puns than ever, into "My Lord Slow Coach"—a title which the mental incapacities of that venerable foreigner rendered unpleasantly appropriate.

The mighty Marmaduke de Grandeville purchased with his wife's money a large estate in —shire, which had belonged to his family some five hundred years before; he has since instituted a set of regulations for his tenantry, formed on the model of the feudal system, and if he be not prematurely suffocated by his own greatness, bids fair to "add a new lustre to the noble name which—ar—ahem!" etc., etc.

Mrs. Arundel carried out her design of marrying her "blighted barrister," and by her liveliness of disposition has done more towards removing the mildew from his mind than could have been expected. As, however, in accordance with her taste, they live chiefly abroad, Lewis and Annie see but little of them.

Miss Livingstone, as she increased in years, grew harsher, stiffer, and more frozen than ever, until one bitter winter's day, happening to catch a slight additional cold, her temperature sank below the point at which animal life could be maintained, and becoming rather stiffer and colder than usual, the first half of her patronymic ceased to be any longer appropriate—her last word was a cross one.

General Grant lived to a good old age, improving, under the in-

fluence of certain bright-eyed little Desboroughs, into a very amiable grandpapa.

The fate of Miles Hardy still remains a mystery; that he did not die of the wounds received in the death-struggle with Lord Bellefield was ascertained; but whether he perished in the Italian revolution, in which he was known to take an active part, or, as was rumoured, escaped in safety to America, the few who are interested in him have failed to learn.

Annie and Lewis, after their stormy transit along that portion of the Railroad of Life in which we have accompanied them, were at length happily united; their future fortunes yet lie hid amid the uncut leaves of the great book of Fate; but one thing we may safely predict—viz., that whatever trials may be in store for them, they will find in their mutual affection a source of constant joy and consolation, of which the lonely-hearted are unhappily ignorant.

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